

SANTA-MARIA;

OR, THE

MYSTERIOUS PREGNANCY.

A ROMANCE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY I. FOX.

I have't—it is engender'd.—Hell and night
Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light.

SHAKSPEARE.

VOL. II.

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SANTA-MARIA.

CHAPTER I.

How sweet the moon-light sleeps upon this bank!
Here will we sit, and let the sound of music
Creep in our ears; soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.—SHAKESPEARE.

IT wanted two hours to midnight, when Valentine ventured from the recess. The moon shone in all her splendour. Her silver rays, that darted through the spreading oak and the tall pine, afforded a strong ray of light on that side of the hill which the minstrel thought best situated for his purpose. Having seated himself on its sloping banks, and attuned his lute to the soft vibrating chords of melancholy, he began to play the dirge sung at the funeral of Lucy Mirando, the proud beauty of the celebrated Fano.

Valentine had scarcely finished this solemn piece of music, when, assisted by the sweet echo that reverberated through the glen, he thought that some persons were speaking over his head. He stopped and listened, with all the agitation that his present forlorn and distressed situation could

possibly give birth to—he arose and listened again. Shortly, his ears were happily saluted from above, with the most welcome sounds; sounds that denoted command, and something of a superior quality. “I will dismount (said the same voice again) for surely some angel or fairy must inhabit this vale. Do you all, therefore remain above, until I reascend.”

When Valentine, however, distinguished the words—“Do you all remain above,” his fear began to tax his discretion. His situation, nevertheless, was too distressing then to admit of fancied apprehensions, when such real and horrible ones withal were so near at hand. Being, therefore, asked from above, whence such celestial sounds proceeded? our minstrel played them over again, in order that the stranger might pursue the notes by his ear. This had the desired effect. Valentine plainly distinguished the approaching footstep. He looked toward the place from whence it reverberated, and could plainly perceive by the bright rays of the moon, a Cavalier approach, arrayed in a suit of fables. He had no time for farther contemplation, as the stranger now stood close beside him. Discovering the minstrel to be considerably depressed with fear, the Cavalier soon relieved his anxiety; and addressing him in the most courteous manner, enquired the subject of those mournful strains, which

had so forcibly struck him, as he was slowly riding by the glen?

“ When I first distinguished the plaintive sounds (continued the stranger) of your dulcive lute, it brought back to my recollection such notes that I have often listened with rapture to before. In days, alas! far more tranquil, and happier than the present. — Methought also the voice had been once familiar to my ear. — But say youth — from what cause proceed these melancholy sounds, that denote so strongly, all is not well within? — Or, are you some en-skied being, dropped from the heavens, to teach us the harmony of the spheres? or, if you are mortal — (which by your looks I scarce believe you are) what makes your residence here in this solitary glen? Say — is some favourite fair one kept captive hereabout — the unwilling sacrifice of age or lechery? Has treachery been at work to empoison the soul of innocence and beauty? Does any hapless virgin groan under the manacles of a brutal father’s rage, for giving vows of love, where he would wish to crush them? — Has some false friends taken refuge in this solitude, to avoid the dashing glance and honest face he once has injured, and now he could not dare to look upon? — Or (oh! answer me) — Have you a mother — here — performing penance for violating of her marriage faith; or a sister —

youth—for breaking of her virgin-knot, before the sacred laws of holy church allowed it?”

At this, the Cavalier, perceiving that Valentine's hand (which he had clasped in his at the first, with the most soothing tenderness) grow rather chilled, he encouraged him to be of good heart, and cheered him with instant promises of assistance, if he would confide in him so far as to acquaint him with the occasion of his distress and melancholy—“ Had I not been so much moved as I was (continued the stranger) at the delicious effusions of your lute; and now, at your modest, youthful, and beautiful countenance, it had been my duty as a *soldier* and a Christian, to afford you all the help my sword and counsel could bestow.”—

Whilst the Cavalier was uttering this last profession of his services, the moon darted full upon their side of the hill, and shone with uncommon splendour on both their faces. Valentine, with strong emotions of pre-sentimental curiosity, took this fair opportunity of surveying the stranger's countenance. He trembled, but knew not for why—his hand became chilled again, and a faintness crept over his whole frame—for, now our minstrel conceived, that in the features of the Cavalier, he could recognize an ancient and beloved—friend, one that he had known in happier days.—Again and again did he

survey the countenance with fresh attention. Then his memory, he thought, belied him. Alas!—he was deceived—no—he was not that same friend his conceit had fondly led him to suppose.—Still—remembrance shot with renovated vigour o'er his mind, and though the features that stood so conspicuously before him (pale, broken, and emaciated as they appeared to be) were not exactly those of him that his imagination had, at first, conceived—yet there was still something in the nature and complexion of them, that he faintly recollected, when erst, tranquillity had cheered his youthful heart.

Whilst Valentine was thus giving way to his silent and wandering conjectures, the Cavalier having enjoyed the same opportunity that the moon's broad phases had mutually afforded, gazed attentively also on the minstrel's countenance, and, after uttering a deep sigh—still retaining the youth's hand entwined in his—poignantly exclaimed—

“ Oh! beauteous boy! how much does that lute—that voice—that face, remind me of ——.”

“ Of who?”—quickly returned the minstrel.

“ Of a—forgive me, boy—a w—— a wretch—One that I loved more tenderly than mine eye-balls—but at whose remembrance my blood now recoils.—Oh!

may misery and perdition—but—I am wandering from the purpose that first led me hither. Come, youth, then (continued the Cavalier, collecting himself in an instant) haste, and acquaint me with the cause of your distress (if there is any such existing) and I will quickly endeavour to set all things right, before I proceed on my journey.”

“ But oh! Sir Cavalier, tell me first, who you can thus praise and curse at once—I, perchance, may soothe your anguish.”

“ You cannot, youth; the disease is past all remedy—therefore, haste and tell, if it is in my power to soothe and assist you. My squire and followers attend me on the brow of this deep glen. I have business of *wondrous import*, that calls me hence, and that right speedily, withal.—If so silent, then (concluded the Cavalier, and rising to depart) I am gone—Youth, farewell, and happier times attend you!”

“ Delay here, then, but for a short while longer (exclaimed the distressed Valentine, in the most piteous accent, now calling to mind the mournful cause that had banished him from the dreary avenues of the recess) have but a little patience, noble Cavalier, and I will tell you all—the story is brief, and the purport of it can soon be related.”

CHAPTER II.

My life upon't, young tho' thou art, thine eye
 Hath staid some favour that it loves;
 Hath it not, boy?

SHAKSPEARE.

VALENTINE having prefaced his story, by observing—"That as he was a wandering and forlorn minstrel, who acquired a lodging and subsistence by his lute—Chance, after an unsuccessful day's excursion, had led him into that glen, to seek a night's repose."—He then precipitately journeyed through his tale, by closely following up the circumstances of his adventure with Father Conrad—the relief he had so fortunately afforded him—his gratitude for the transitory preservation he had met with from his hands—his despair—his recent death—with the discovery of the coffin, and the scroll, behind the black arras—and, in short, all the other events that had taken place betwixt himself and the monk, from his first abode in the recess, to the Father's dissolution.

"This (concluded Valentine) is my short tale; and the reluctance I felt—for oh! Sir Cavalier, I have never been, like you, bred up to arms) to proceed farther in what still remains concealed, compelled me to seek the downy coat of this hill, that, by the persuasive force of my lute, I might, perhaps, attract some passing stranger, or chance traveller, to be

a co-equal witness of what now continues unrevealed; and also, to assist me in performing those last ceremonies to the dead, which my too fearful heart could never be encouraged singly to go through. Fortunately, you were the first who descended, and the first, I am well convinced, who would aid me in my purpose. If willing, therefore, to relieve an hapless—poor—defenceless boy, attend me to this same recess, and then you shall learn farther.”

The stranger listened with silence and surprise to the minstrel's artless tale.—When it was concluded, however, he did not hesitate a moment, in assenting to comply with his request. From what he had just heard, there was no doubt, but what guilt and anguish had long resided where he was proceeding to. Mystery had been the peculiar province of his own life and fortunes—at first, dark and impenetrable.

But as mysteries, toward the last conclusion of the eventful scene, of a foul and a blackened nature, seldom, or ever, fail of being dragged into the broad glare of day—so had it fell out, in part, with him—now the stirring actor of a most bloody tragedy. One tragedy, however, done, another might succeed. The enveloped scene of mystery, though vanished from his own person, might still hang hovering over other heads—aye, and over the heads, per-

haps, of those who have commenced the act with him, but not concluded it so soon. Like his own stirring part at first—perplexed—apparently unfathomable—till chance, with uncertain flight, dropped on the theatre of life's extended action, and publishes to the world's ear what was once supposed to be locked up for ever in the womb of oblivion.

As Valentine was leading the courteous stranger towards his recess, he distinguished his followers, by the rays of the moon, on the brow of the hill. On this, he drew his sword, and waved it loftily in the air, as a token that they should descend.

Our minstrel, on discovering the naked sword of his warlike comrade, expressed an alarm, that was immediately perceived by the stranger. He instantly, however, removed his apprehensions, by observing, that it was only a promised signal to his attendants: "For, previous to my descent, (said he) I ordered them particularly to watch the token, lest any unforeseen accident might happen.—But, youth (continued the Cavalier, with a smile of retort, as they journeyed towards the recess) why so susceptible of fear? It does not become a man to be so daunted on every occasion—these apprehensions more become a woman's nature."

"Alas! Sir Knight (replied the Minstrel, with a deep sigh) I am no soldier."

"I warrant that (returned the stranger)

no doubt, but what you have fed more on the smiles of yielding beauty, than you ever tasted the frowns of hostile danger. When I regard those expressive eyes—those animated features, and that prepossessing form, I cannot but credit you have possessed the heart of many a beauteous damsel. Women cannot well resist such qualities and temptations as you inherit. The delicious harmony of your voice, and the skilful dispositions of your lute, must have ensured you more conquests, than could a whole life devoted to war and danger.—A soldier's chiefest—noblest recompence—do you enjoy.”—

Valentine, on hearing this—reclined his head, and blushed.—

“What! blushing too withall?—Now believe me, most gallants would be happy to recount—aye, and redouble the conquests you must have obtained;—besides, your occupation suits you for a lady's bed-chamber. There you can lull them into fondness—delight their enraptured senses to the highest zenith of irresistible desire, and enchant them to commit fond, dying, mutual deeds of exquisite love and tenderness. The unguarded husband, the too credulous parent, and the unsuspecting brother, do not consider on the dangers their wives, their daughters, and their sisters experience, when such handsome, modest-seeming, beardless youths as you, intrude upon their too pliable, susceptible

natures. No, perdition seize me if they do—(raising his voice here with uncommon warmth, and which betrayed that what he had hitherto uttered, arose more from spleen and satire, than any pleasure he could receive from the rehearsed ecstasies of love)—No, no, fame, honour, gratitude, and affection, are soon overwhelmed in the amorous dalliance of mutual—love, I would have said—let me however change it—to mutual lust; for love can never take a lasting residence where honour does not abide also.”

“That last expression, Sir Knight (observed Valentine) is virtuous, nobly spoken, and well becomes you. The former part of your discourse, however, ill suits with the melancholy errand we are now upon.”

“Come, come (replied the stranger, with an assumed tone of merriment) be not afraid of the consequences hanging on our errand. Neither dead men, or coffins, or any mysterious scrolls, can disturb the mind, where guilt does not inhabit. I am young like unto yourself;—fond also of attending to the tales of love. Come then, and cheer me onward, with the histories of those who have shared your favours.—I have heard of many a dame, and damsel too, who have become the happiest sacrifices to a voice, a skill, and a person like your’s; all as deliciously happy in your embrace, as you have been in their’s.”

Valentine, who from some experience,

had become in a measure acquainted with the duplicity and yielding nature of his sex (or, rather, more closely speaking, *her sex*) soon discerned, that the Cavalier's mirth, was not only assumed, but estranged from his real nature; one expression alone, convinced him that his genuine thoughts on *real love*, were pure and noble. The flattery he had bestowed on his voice, skill, and person, appeared to him to be a well directed feint, to discover some mystery, which at present was impenetrable. Curiosity, therefore, and not inclination to converse on these tender, or rather lascivious topics, was his sole intent. Valentine, however, finding himself hardly pressed upon the subject, and knowing he had some farther way to proceed, before they reached the recess, thus pathetically replied to his amorous interrogatories:

“ Sir Knight (said the minstrel) if you will thus persist in learning the progress of my attributed conquests, and the real situation of my heart, so far shall you be acquainted. For these some years, have I pursued the occupation of a minstrel; several noble houses have received me under their hospitable roofs, from the skill in music, you are pleased to say, that I inherit. Several ladies too, and fair ones withal, have bestowed their dearest affections upon me. I might, indeed, (had it so in my nature been) have enjoyed all

the transports that mutual love could bestow. Two cogent reasons, however, forbade me to indulge an unwarrantable disposition.—First, Sir Cavalier, I would not for the treasures of the Indus, have so heinously violated the laws of hospitality, and wounded the peace of my protector, as either to debauch his wife, child, or sister.—In the next place (excuse me for being so brief, as I perceive we are nearly approaching the recess)—I have a passion so deeply rooted in my heart for one person, and one person only, that neither beauty, superior as it may be, or affection ever so greater, can ever wean my imagination from him.”

“ From *him*, youth, did you say ? ”

“ From *him*, Sir Knight—Alack a day! you do mistake—From *her*, I said.—Alas! what hold doth absence take upon the grief-worn mind.”

“ It is even thus—such also has it been with me.—But to continue (said the stranger) with our love histories.—Say then, youth—Did the fair one return your kindness ? ”

“ She did—we loved, and were beloved of all; till the shafts of adversity and slander interfered between our mutual happiness, and marred of all our future prospects of approaching bliss.”

The stranger would have questioned farther, and more definitive explanations

might *probably* have taken place, had they not been critically interrupted by the trampling and neighing of horses that followed behind. The Cavalier on distinguishing this, turned round, and thus familiarly addressing himself to the foremost.—

“ In good faith, Sebastian, you have pursued us close.”

“ My Lord (replied the other) we soon perceived your signal, and distinguished your voice, as you passed onward, we followed you at some humble distance. Aldobrand, also (pointing to a beautiful black charger, which he was leading by the rein) recognized it also, and sensible to the sound, began neighing on the instant.—But I hope, my Lord,—no particular accident has called us here?”

“ None, Sebastian, of any serious import.—Nothing, indeed, that will long delay us from pursuing the remainder of our journey to the Castle.”

Valentine had scarce time to contemplate the comely and martial appearance of Sebastian—the noble and stately animal, Aldobrand—or the words, my Lord,—and journey to the Castle, before they reached the mouth of the recess.

“ This, my Lord (said the minstrel then, with a peculiar strong emphasis)—this is the spot, where Father Conrad lies a corpse, and where the mysteries I told you of remain concealed. On this the noble unknown deputed the veteran Laun-

celot (and father of Sebastian) to watch carefully without, whilst his son and himself should attend the young stranger into the recess.

CHAPTER III.

Oh! when the last account 'twixt heav'n and earth
Is to be made then shall this hand and seal
Witness against thee to damnation. SHAKSPEARE.

AS Valentine was leading the way through the narrow embowered avenue that pointed to the recess, he stopped all of a sudden—being overcome (as he said) with a faintness that struck chilly to his very soul. The stranger attributing his sickness to his fears, gently forced him to recline on his arm; and then turning round to his 'squire, he observed, "Ah! Sebastian, this tender-bosomed youth has not been cased, like us, in the tough armour of danger and adversity! But come—courage, boy (continued the Cavalier, addressing himself to Valentine) pluck up thy mettle for thy mistress' sake. She will not love thee else; nor pain herself to lull and nurse thee in the soft cradle of fond dalliance. He trembles, Sebastian. Assist him with your arm—Come, let us enter in abreast—Cheerly—Cheerly, youth, and be not thus depressed. Let not apprehension thus overpower you."

They now entered into the chamber of death—Valentine turned away his head

from the corpse—His companions, however, regarded it with an air of the utmost indifference—“ This arched door (said the stranger) I suppose, youth, leads into the apartment you told me of?”

“ The same, my Lord?”

They then entered the second recess—Sebastian leading the way, as the passage would not admit of three abreast.

“ There also is the coffin, I see, that you alluded to.” Then addressing himself to Sebastian, the stranger observed with a smile, “ Something strikes me, my friend, that we shall meet with *another* adventure here.”

Whilst the utmost calmness and composure reigned in the hearts of Sebastian and his Lord, it was far otherwise with the agitated Minstrel—A sickly faintness still continued hanging over him; whilst his throbbing heart beat to and fro, as though it would burst from the precincts of its corporeal prison—The violence of his womanly apprehensions, however, subsided, when he considered and regarded the presence, coolness, and intrepidity, of his two companions.

The stranger having taken the scroll from the coffin, and first perusing it to himself, he afterward disclosed the contents, as thus, to Valentine and Sebastian:

“ Whenever chance may lead some Christian step into this dreary recess of death, let these last wishes of an un-

“ happy sinner be complied with: First,
 “ to deposit whatever scattered remains
 “ that he may discover hereabout within
 “ the coffin that stands concealed behind
 “ the black hanging in the adjoining cham-
 “ ber.—In the next place, this first Chris-
 “ tian act performed, let him see the re-
 “ mains conveyed for interment, to the
 “ great convent of the Carthusians, on St.
 “ Martin’s Hill, near the Castle of St.
 “ Elma—For these labours, he will find
 “ a noble recompence. Beneath the ad-
 “ joining hanging, also, lie concealed two
 “ small iron chests—one contains—the
 “ aforesaid recompence—the other holds
 “ a parchment scroll—sacred to the eye
 “ of one alone. Let it be delivered,
 “ therefore, as the outward covering di-
 “ rects——To a strange and unconcerned
 “ inspecting eye, it matters not; though
 “ to the right owner it will convey most
 “ damnable truths.—And, rescue—(Oh!
 “ God forgive me) innocence, honour, and
 “ beauty from the shaft of obloquy and
 “ persecution. According, therefore (who-
 “ ever thou mayest be) as you act honour-
 “ ably, and up to the tenor of this pa-
 “ per, so may your recompence prove a
 “ comfort and a blessing.

(Signed) “ CONRAD.

“ Late a Father of the convent of the
 “ Carthusians.”]

The stranger having thus far examined

into the mysteries attached to the first hanging, they proceeded to the second coarse arras. This being drawn aside, they discovered two shelves. On the uppermost shelf were the two small iron chests, and on the nethermost were a skull and some transixed human bones——

“ These remnants of our body’s dissolution (said the Cavalier to Valentine) must have been the cause, no doubt, of the offensive smell that you mentioned on the Hill. This same Father Conrad (continued he, addressing himself next to Sebastian) has been guilty, I foresee, of some damnable crime, as this scroll I hold has already implied. And——like those guilty wretches resembling unto himself that have been handed down from memory to memory:—wretches, who either expected for some blasted violations of their sacred laws and functions; or by the secret—still more horrible punctures of a stirring conscience, have been forced to fly from the soothing bonds of social intercourse, to the clandestine solitary haunts of woods and caves. And here it is that Hope sometimes faintly softens their despair with a wild, confused expectation—that by a severe abstinence—fastings—self-inflicted corporal punishments, and continual prayers, they offer up an atonement to the blessed ministers above for crimes as black as is the Ethiop’s skin—and though

“ Unfit to live, or die”——

Still will they keep up this stale superstitious farce of mortification—Still will they preserve our mortal relics to gape—to stare upon, and to pray to withal, though these same musty bones must bitterly remind them of that awful self-dissolution which they are themselves so unprepared to meet, and which, if once re-animated, might publish to the world such confessional horrid truths, as would make the hair even of murder, blasphemy, and *incest*, stand an end.”—

The stranger now drew forth the iron chests:—they were, however, both locked—But, Valentine soon removed the obstacle that presented itself on opening the same, by pointing out another paper to his companions, which he perceived had been fixed between the two cross bones.—On this fresh discovery, the Cavalier, immediately opened the paper, and as he had done before with the first—read it silently to himself.—Having fully examined its contents, he turned round with a smile of joy and uncommon satisfaction. Then shaking Valentine heartily by the hand, he exultingly congratulated him on his approaching good fortune——“ I wish thee merry, my boy (said he) with all this wealth—The Monk, in good faith, has however, performed one good and generous deed—whatever his darker one may prove to have been.—Thy lute, youth, shall henceforward sound cheerly; no mournful dirges

now, but sprightly ditties. I will have love-sonnets now, and amorous ones withal;—such as will give fresh vigour to old threescore and more.—And when inclined to martial strains, thou shalt give me the song of war.”

Upon this, the stranger, in the liveliest effusions of joy and congratulation, arising solely from the pure, though sudden friendship he began to feel for the Minstrel, thus read aloud the contents of this second scroll:

“ The keys that can only open these
“ two chests are pending within the coffin.
“ To whatever stranger’s fortune it may
“ arrive to open the same, his gratitude
“ also will induce him to comply speedily
“ with every particular of my last dying
“ wishes.”

After having read thus far, the stranger ordered Sebastian to open the lid, and obtain these same keys.

He then continued the scroll:

“ The silver key opens the chest that
“ contains my treasures. The iron one
“ also opens the second, that contains the
“ mysterious manuscript.”

To this was annexed the following codicil, which appeared to have been recently added to the letter:

“ This my treasure consists of ten
“ thousand crowns.—The whole amount
“ of which I solemnly bequeath to the
“ Minstrel Valentine, on whose dear cha-

“ rity—sweet humanity, and celestial benevolence, I also commit the disposal of my departed body.—Jesus Christ once more have mercy on my poor troubled soul.

(Signed) “ CONRAD.”

“ Marry, my well-favoured boy (now observed the stranger) what think ye of this sudden and happy change of fortune?”

“ Indeed, I think, my good Lord (replied Valentine) that this unexpected treasure may much more worthily, and with my free consent, be rested in your possession than in mine. You, I am well assured, have ability to preserve or dispose of it, as hereafter circumstances may think fit.”

If the stranger had been before so interested by the manners, discourse, and beauty, of the minstrel, he now became more so, from this last instance of candour and generosity. “ My noble spirit (said he, with an emphatic ardor, that was akin to paternal love) I perceive you now merit this unexpected boon of good-fortune, even if it was ten times more than its present value. It is such as you who deserve her favours most; for by despising them, your heart is alone susceptible of sharing them with the unfortunate and forlorn.—But come, we will talk more of this anon.—Sebastian, give me those keys.”

CHAPTER IV.

But that I am forbid—

I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul.

————— Were't my fitness

To let these hands obey my boiling blood,
They're apt enough to dislocate and tear
His flesh and bones.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE keys being presented to the stranger he first took the silver one, and opened the nearer chest; it was full to the very top, and seemed to contain the whole treasure that had been particularly described in the Father's codicil.—“ And now (observed the Cavalier) we will proceed to open the other chest, which is supposed to contain such damnable truths.—But first, youth, suffer me to possess you with this your indefeasible right; of which myself and Sebastian are sufficient testimonials, and which we will protect you in, to the extremity of our lives and fortunes.”

On this, he proceeded to open the chest with the iron key, and strait-forth took out a cumbrous parchment roll;—casting his eye on the superscription, he started some paces backward.—Then after a pause that denoted great agony and astonishment, he precipitately broke open the large seal, with which it was fastened. Valentine instantly perceiving his purpose, exclaimed with uncommon spirit and resolution—
“ My Lord—my Lord, proceed no farther

—reflect, you are about to transgress the last wishes of a dying man.”

“Peace, boy—if aught you value my future friendship and protection.—This parchment concerns me equally with the person to whom it is addressed.—Disturb me not, for I’ll go through with it, though each word should prove a basilisk to mine eye.” Upon this determination, he began to unfold the parchment, and to look upon its damnable contents.

The onset of this fatal scroll had been scarce surveyed by the noble incognito, when he began to throw his cloak backwards over his shoulders, and his hat, with its sable plumage, was also removed from his head to the earth, whilst big drops of sweat distilled themselves in torrents from his agonized face. Valentine, at this distressing and sudden change, was agitated beyond conception. He regarded the manly, though pallid countenance of the stranger, with a rising emotion of tenderness and susceptibility, that he had not felt for him half so powerfully, as at this present critical juncture. The more he reviewed his features, his person, his manner, the more he was perplexed and uncertain. Both his strength of mind and body, however, began to forsake him, and Valentine, overcome with a sickly faintness, sunk listless into Sebastian’s arms. He was immediately carried by the other to a seat, which being fixed close to a ta-

ble, the poor struggling minstrel immediately threw his arms thereon, and reclining his head between his hands, became for a few moments the victim of insensibility.

The astounded Cavalier, in the mean time, continued reading on, whilst every line produced a fever in his mind, almost too hot for sufferance. His soul too, was so stirred by the strong tempest of boiling wrath, which agitated his whole frame, that it felt as though well nigh bursting from its corporal element. As for Sebastian, he stood a silent spectator of the different scenes of misery that surrounded him; and though his duty (as taught him by custom, on some former unknown occasions) forbade him to interrupt his young Lord, still he felt secretly, and that most poignantly withal, at the sight of such strong and uncommon agonies, that were depicted in the marking countenance of his master. To be brief, it was some time before the stranger had concluded the perusal of this datonable scroll.—When he had made a finish, however, his mind, after experiencing all the convulsions of a most dreadful furious storm, abated by degrees into a state of calmness; whilst reflection came floating on the surface of reason, and soon dispelled the tempest that had just been raging with such uncommon fury. Having, therefore, deposited the parchment in the chest again, and

fastened it with the iron-key; he very deliberately arranged his mantle, and perceiving, as he turned round, that Valentine continued leaning despondently on the table, he tenderly raised his recumbent head, and clasping him affectionately by both his hands, he thus endeavoured to console and blunt the anguish of his too susceptible feelings:

“ Youth (said the gallant stranger) be not thus spirit-broken and dismayed.—Did you but experience what run so lately through my soul; horrors inexpressible would almost have irrecoverably sunk you.—Oh! my friend—my dearest friend—such, indeed, I shall ever call you (even if a former secret inclination had not prompted me to have done that already)—for first leading me into this dreary—and, I would have said—damnable—but now, as it proves, most propitious recess. In me regard a future brother, a kind protector—so look upon me, for such will you ever find me.”

“ But oh! my Lord—what of that parchment—some horrid mystery remains concealed therein.”

“ No more, youth, of that at present;—the mystery concerns you not.—When it is read, however, again, you shall be the foremost auditor of its contents.

“ And here, I declare, in presence of Sebastian, and upon the honour of a baron,

that, seven days from hence, you shall be principally made acquainted with the whole.—Till then, I earnestly conjure you not to entreat, nor question me farther on the subject; as such beseeching would wound both my feelings, and lessen the gratitude and friendship I so devoutly bear you. In the mean time, satisfy me so far as to give your free consent unto my future purposes.—The restraint (if such it can be called) that I wish to attach to your person, will be of short durance.—Let not your tender and susceptible nature, therefore, throw a cloud over your mind, to darken and perplex it.—To conclude, my amiable young friend, it is my wish to remove you straight from this recess of infamy and death, and dwell you for a while, where virtue, safety, and tranquillity conjointly abide. Launcelot (my Sebastian's father here) inherits a neat cottage, in a small village, southward of this spot. His wife, moreover, is a discreet, good-natured merry dame. There intend I, then, to reside you for a short day or so; and to convince you, youth, how much I rely on your integrity and honour; and to prove also, how distantly you are concerned in the mystery of that damnable scroll, I have so fortunately discovered in this howling Monk's recess, I will depute you the guardian of the one chest, as much and as truly, as you are in your own right sole protector of the other; or as safely, in

short, as I would entrust my own life and fame in your possession."

"My Lord, I thank you for your fair opinion of me, and shall be content to act as you think fit.—But say (added Valentine)—what is to be done with the melancholy remains of father Conrad?"

"Leave that task to me (replied the stranger, with a rising emotion in his voice and looks); his remains, shall quickly have greater honour paid them than they deserve. Believe me, youth (continued he, with a softened accent, fearful that he should wound the minstrel's susceptible nature) I bear no enmity to the dead, tho' I may look back on their living deeds with horror and detestation.—Oh! my friend, that one chest contains a catalogue of such black enormities, perpetrated by that damned Monk, as would harrow up thy tender soul.—But no more of that, at present;—let it suffice, that he shall be buried in the mouth of this recess; an abode too good for his impious remains."

"Oh! good my Lord (exclaimed the tender-bosomed minstrel) let them be deposited in his coffin, and interred in the convent of the Carthusians, as the Father has requested in his last will—let them, I do most fervently beseech of you, be disposed of as he has expressed in his dying testament. It would be monstrous ingratitude in me, after the wealth he has

so liberally consigned over to my possession, for that purpose chiefly, not to see this last ceremony performed."

"Alas! youth (replied the stranger) what avails it where his body rests? Whether in this spot, or in the remotest regions of the earth. The worm exists within monastic ground, the same as underneath this mould. Besides all this, my friend, if the Father's remains were immediately forwarded to the monastery or convent of the Carthusians—it would not only be unprofitable trouble, but expose his memory to increased horror and infamy; for the moment this same confessional scroll gets report among the brethren of his order, his relics will be disembowelled from their mother Earth, and left to moulder in the common stews."

"But still, my Lord (thus tenderly urged the minstrel) there is an infinite gratification in conforming to the last wishes of those whom we have either known or conversed with in their dying moments, let their guilt or transgressions be ever so glaringly infamous.—Repentance is reconcilable to the Almighty—then why not with us?—Father Conrad appeared to me a sinner on his own account—but still, my Lord, he seemed a repentant one, also.—I am unconscious of his sins, but still I have been an eye-witness of his repentance, and repentance the most sincere and poignant, withal.—Death surely cancels all worldly

animosities;—and—though we condemn the wretched malefactor's crimes, when stretched upon the excruciating wheel, still we cannot refrain from commiserating his agonies, and feeling for his intense sufferings. It is not our province to examine farther than death. The unhappy victim passes on to another tribunal, and which we cannot search into, or arraign. It is there alone, they will be adjudged sufficiently, without the possibility of our carrying farther credence, or balancing the merciful scales held forth by the just ministers of heaven.—Besides, good my Lord—religion and habit also teach us, to view the last ceremony of the dead performed with proper catholic rites. The ground, here, is not consecrated for your present design; therefore, delay your purpose till the morning—let the Father, if he may not be conveyed to the convent of the Carthusians, have some show of Christian burial.—No doubt but some church or monastery is near at hand, where he may, at least, be decently interred, and where a priest can be procured to perform the funeral ceremony.—Gratitude, on my part, (concluded Valentine) requests this humble boon, and which your honour, your apparent gentleness, my Lord, I am well assured, will not deny.”

“ Every sentence that you utter, youth, (replied the noble stranger) endears me to

you, more and more.—Your gratitude o'er-tops the measure of your tenderness and generosity. But was I persuaded to comply with your request, I could not; for in an hour or so, I must depart hence. For the whole world (so dearly and fondly do I grow attached towards you) I would not leave you in this gloomy recess of death and guilt—I will first see the remains of this incestuous, impious, and most damnable monk (for damned he most assuredly is) deposited here; and then convey you to Launcelot's cottage, where I shall not only find you secure and happy, but also, hereafter adduce you, most haply, a principal witness of this night's marvellous discovery. As for Christian rites, or the offices of a priest, his remains deserve them not. Believe me, youth, I am as compassionate, have as much of the milk of human kindness in me—*even as yourself*.—When you but know what now thrills with horror (when I think of it) through my brain, you will find, I acted rightly, nay, leniently withal. An act of ceremonial mercy, that, for your sake only, should not else have taken accomplishment. —For——if it was agreeable to my own will, and according to the deserts of this execrable monster—this most impious Father, I would have his mildewed—horrid remains hung up on the first neighbouring tree, as fit provision for vagrant carrion.”

CHAPTER V.

But I will keep her ign'rant of her good,
To make her heav'nly comforts, of despair,
When it is least expected. SHAKSPEARE.

Far from his friends, they placed him in the horrid
circle of *Brumo*, where often, they said, the ghosts
of the dead howled round the stone of their fear,

OSSIAN.

Beneath is all the fiends, there's hell, there's darkness,
There is the sulphureous pit, burning, scalding, stench,
Consumption. — SHAKSPEARE.

VALENTINE perceiving after this that
all farther persuasions to gain his point
would be ineffectual, continued silent.—
Sebastian was then just ordered to go forth,
to summon as many domestics in, that
could be spared from the horses.

“ There, my good fellows (said the
stranger, in a gentle accent, void of all
masterly authority, and pointing to the
fire) go trim and light your torches, and
then I will direct you farther. *My friend*,
here (next addressing himself to Valentine,
for neither yet had bethought themselves
of enquiring each other's name) you can,
in the mean time, inform me where the
Monk's implements lie concealed, where-
with he formed this recess, as reported in
your story.”

The Minstrel, on this, accompanied by
the stranger and Sebastian, proceeded to
the outermost chamber, and there inform-
ed his companions, that he believed they

were deposited nigh hand the deceased's pallet.

Sebastian, forthwith, perceived a spade and pick-axe, the principal tools wanting for their present purpose. On this, the stranger re-entered the inner recess, and, taking a torch in his hand, ordered his servants to bring the coffin where the corpse lay stretched. The sable inclosure of death then being laid on the ground, close to the side of the pallet, the body, garment, and all, were rolled off, and crammed in together.—Just, however, as they were on the point of fastening the lid, the stranger recollected the human scull, and cross bones, that they had seen behind one of the hangings.—“ Hold (said he, as the humane thought came across him) and, before we fasten up the coffin, let us inter with the corpse, all those miserable emblems of mortal decay, and rotten insignias of despair and guilt that lie scattered about the recess. Some benighted traveller, or wandering innocent, may, one day or another, stray towards this ingenious shelter, and those trappings of woe, will, no doubt, on these accidental occasions, render it as horribly disagreeable, as it is now conveniently formed for protection and repose. On this, our Cavalier, attended by Sebastian, brought forth the human relics, together with the sable hangings, that had caused so much offence and anxiety to the minstrel.—

These were altogether, though with much difficulty, likewise crammed into the coffin. This unceremonious task being performed, the stranger addressed himself again to Valentine, and requested him to retire for a while, into the interior recess, whilst they went through their final purpose. The Minstrel, however, overwhelmed with all the anxiety, fear, and horror, that such a shocking scene must inspire in a bosom so timid as his own, and dreading solitude still more than any fresh horrors could afford—requested to continue wherever he should chance to be: “For, in your presence, my Lord (said Valentine) I have nothing, I am sure, farther to apprehend.”—On this, he fastened himself on the Knight’s arm, and clasping it with an hitherto unusual degree of fervour and affection; accompanied him to the mouth of the recess.

Two of the men, being provided with the pick-axe and spade, began the funeral task. The ground, which was of a clayey nature, and had been hardened (as before observed) by the fires which had been kindled thereon, they found to be very obdurate both against their tools and their strength. The stranger perceiving this, ordered them to penetrate no lower than what would just suffice for the depth and breadth of the coffin, and as shallow a surface as possible to be laid thereon.

Poor Valentine could not be a spectator

of this awful ceremony, without experiencing the most painful emotions. His arm trembled beneath that of his present—and, as he fondly hoped—his future protector. The composure and unconcern that the latter had hitherto manifested, on this gloomy occasion, was attributed, by the minstrel—partly, to the mystery of the scroll, and partly to his gallant profession of arms, which had rendered him familiar to the sight of death; for he was well convinced, it could not be charged to his lack of humanity.

When the slender pit was dug, the Cavalier ordered the corpse to be enclosed, and the head of it to be turned towards the northern point; for this site (said he) will best agree with the tempestuous discord of its howling spirit.

Scarce, however, had these words escaped his lips, when they were alarmed by a violent rustling noise in one of the adjoining chambers.—The men were somewhat startled, and betrayed a kind of unusual apprehension, which could arise only from the dismal office they had been engaged in; for otherwise, and till now, their brave natures had never known the idle qualms of fear.

It happened still worse, however, with Valentine, for when he had at first distinguished the rustling sounds within, his knees smote against each other—his teeth chattered—and he would have dropped

senseless on the ground, had he not been held up by his dauntless companion.

“Cheerily—cheerily, my boy (gently exclaimed the latter, feeling for the agony Valentine so perceptibly laboured under) What art afraid of?—Why, thou chicken-hearted youth (continued he with a smile) I will have thee pinned up in some nursery, among little children, and wanton hand-maids. There, indeed, thou mayest prove of valiant service, and, the damsels willing, improve their hot-beds—with a second stock.”——Then, turning to his two grave-diggers, who had let the coffin fall obliquely on the margin of its burial-place, he gave them both an austere look, and then with his former strain of irony (observed) “What! art thou both panic-struck likewise? Marry, and on my very troth, I shall couple thee with this milk-sop, to truckle with the maids also, and jerk them underneath their downy chins.”

The Cavalier, on this, accompanied by Sebastian, with each torch in their hand, would have proceeded with him alone into the recess; but, Valentine, notwithstanding the severity of his fears, stuck closely on his arm, inwardly defying every dreadful circumstance that might at present or hereafter occur, when under the protection of his guardian wing.——The two men, on the other hand, stung with the reproach of their Lord, and thinking, perhaps, that some ambuscade had been laid by a neigh-

bouring banditti, or some Corsairs of Barbary, that infested most of these southern parts of Italy, might have occasioned this loud and rustling noise (particularly, as what their Captain had uttered in regard to the Monk, gave them no favourable presentiment of the place they were in) they both drew their swords, and immediately followed him into the recess.

The noise still continued, though apparently retreating at every forward step they took. The farther they advanced, so by degrees it subsided, and at last died entirely away.

The Cavalier examined every part of the anterior chamber with the utmost deliberation and circumspection, but could discover nothing——“What (exclaimed he, with a smile, on thus being disappointed) have we nothing here.—Marry then, whatever you may be, let me caution you to lie still, till we have performed our ceremony, and suffer us quietly to be gone. Or else, beware of trifling!”

They then proceeded to the inner recess, and finding every thing vacant there also, the stranger, with fresh jocularity again observed: “Why, surely, Father Conrad, has not already dispatched his ghost hither, to alarm us all, before his body has been interred! The devil, his old master, will surely torment him a little for the black deeds he instigated him to commit in this world, before he gives his spirit an infer-

nal passport to return among us once again. Or,—perhaps this mildewed lump of infamy purposes to take the same advantage of the living when dead, as he did of the dead when living. Though, on recollection (concluded the stranger, with a sigh, that he endeavoured to suppress, but which, however, came from his very heart) this same pupil of darkness has done enough already here, without attempting to torment us any more.”

Whilst the Cavalier was conversing thus, Valentine attentively observed his countenance, and could perceive a degree of anguish thereon, that did not altogether correspond with the levity of his discourse. He, perhaps, thought (a thought arising from the anxiety he had all along observed in the stranger to allay and soften his own distracted fears) that his peculiar composure, on an occasion which would have alarmed the many, was only generously assumed to quiet the terrors it was but too susceptible that he himself had so strongly and repeatedly laboured under. One observation, indeed, that he had, both struck and perplexed Valentine to sift the disposition of:—“ Perhaps, this mildewed lump of infamy purposes to take the same advantage of the *living when dead*, as he did of the *dead when living*.”—What advantage the Father could have taken of the dead when living, the Min-

Urel could by no means whatever account for? It was some mystery (he concluded) attached to the scroll; and he therefore forbore to rack his invention, when endeavouring to interpret its obscurity, as his curiosity would be fully gratified with a knowledge of the whole in the short space of a day or so.

The stranger's conversation, however, had a more particular effect on his two domestics; for though they feared no being existing, still they began to be greatly alarmed, when their Lord talked of the Monk's ghost; and when he also could not discover, or account for, the strange noise they had just so distinctly heard.—Whatever were their fears and dread, however, of immaterial beings, they, nevertheless, silently followed their master again to the mouth of the recess—where they concluded their task with visible agitation, and buried the corpse in the shallow hole they had dug for it.

CHAPTER VI.

— How fits expectation in the air.

Dear lad, believe it,

For they shall yet belie thy happier years,

That say thou art a man; Diana's lip

Is not more smooth and rubious: thy small pipe

Is as the maiden's organ, shrill and sound,

And all is femblative a woman's part.—SHAKS.

SCARCE however, had the two men (stranger still than before!) scattered the

earth over the Monk's remains, when they distinguished the noise, with more violence than ever. On this, they momentarily let their pick-axe and spade fall upon the ground. Their fears now doubly debilitated their powers, for they could scarce fasten their hands on the handles of their swords. The stranger, nevertheless (whose surprize and rage, fortunately for them, now expelled all traces of his former levity) did not observe their apprehensions, but with his wonted courage and fortitude, drew forth his good sword, the moment he heard the internal noise repeated, and holding the torch in his left hand, instantly rushed into the first recess, exclaiming with much vehemence, as he went—"By my soul and my honour, I will not thus be farther tampered with!—Follow me, Sebastian—we will discover the key to this mystery, or perish in the attempt;—my curiosity shall be satisfied at all events."

The undaunted Cavalier thus rushing impetuously forward, he unwittingly left Valentine behind, petrified with horror, and motionless as a statue. As for the two men, they were equally overcome with their own fears, and the apprehensions they entertained for their young Lord; but stood staring at each other, incapable of speaking, and uncertain whether to follow, or remain where they were. Each alike seemed ready to advance, but

neither was willing to take the lead. At length they distinguished a faint clashing of swords, which like an electric shock, gave instant re-animation to both, and straight they rushed forward abreast, to assist their master.

Valentine, the moment he heard this same clash, screamed aloud, and then as loudly exclaimed—"Oh! spare the gallant youth—spare the noble——" Nature then yielded to this uncommon exertion of power, and he staggered against the clayey wall, unable to move or speak farther. His remaining senses, however, were as almost instantly struck with a loud laughter, which seemed to proceed from the innermost chamber;—this sound denoted the triumph of a conquering party. On this, he drooped almost lifeless on the piece of earth where the Monk had been just interred; his spirits, nevertheless, were as almost instantly cheered, by hearing the Cavalier, in approaching accents, exclaim—"By Saint Mark, we will sacrifice this fellow, as a victim to our fears!"—Valentine, on hearing this immediately sprung from his prostrate state, and scarce had he tremblingly hurried towards the first entrance—when his poor hawk flew towards him, and perching directly on his fist, looked up to him in apparent solicitation for shelter and protection.

Our falconer (for falconer or minstrel we may call him, according to the change

of circumstances) tenderly moved by the bird's attachment, and now clearly perceiving the innocent object of their pursuit, to have been the harmless cause of all their late fears—he held forth the affectionate and favourite companion of his solitude, and with an accent of fondness, altogether irresistible, exclaimed—“ Oh! Sir Cavalier, do not destroy my very best of friends, my faithful falcon, and my most active caterer.”

The Knight, struck alike with the confident perch of the hawk, who now seemed to bid him defiance, for under the protection of his master, he was ready, with his pointed beak, fixed talons, and wide expanded wing, to meet a fair combat, and moved also with the expressive tenderness of Valentine, whose still palid countenance fully explained what he had felt and undergone in their absence; but he clasped him like a tender beloved brother to his generous breast. This endearing token of his future friendship, was repeated thrice—thrice with all that affectionate ardor which accompanies the real existence of that great and noble social passion; and then, looking stedfastly on the falconer, he smilingly and archly observed—“ Why, boy, this bosom is as soft and yielding, as that of the ripening virgin.”

Valentine blushed, and held down his

head, and in order also to conceal his emotions, he stroked his hawk, who in return would readily have perched for that night on the tender spot that had been so lately embraced by his rival and persecutor.

After the Cavalier had (as a matter of some compensation) admired and encouraged the poor hawk, whom he had so much alarmed and endangered; he turned round to his servants, and seeing their swords still unsheathed, and themselves ashamed of their idle fears—he ordered them to be covered, and laying aside his former irony, on such like occasions, he observed—“ Indeed, my good fellows, I have known men brave as yourselves terrified at the flitting of a bat around their dark nightly tent, as much as we have all been at the fluttering of this poor harmless hawk.—But marry, boy, and thou, my faithful Sebastian, shall be cheerful now, for in searching after the poor father’s supposed spirit, we found something more substantial—plenty of game, friends, and some dozen flasks of wine!”

“ And this very bird (replied Valentine, pointing to the hawk, who hung close to his master’s fist, and at the same keeping a steady and penetrating eye on the stranger, whose familiar strokings could not entirely divest him of the apprehensions he had so lately experienced) —This very bird, caught this same game.

—The poor fellow (continued he with a smile) has not met with much recompence and gratitude, for the supper he is about to provide you with.”

After the stranger had allowed the propriety of this gentle rebuke, he told his men to go out and see whether the horses without were safe, and to relieve their companions from their watch. Launcelot, on this, soon after made his first appearance in the recess, and as quickly reported, that the animals had been all carefully fastened round the body of a tree, whose nethern branches seemed at the first moment to yield them some acceptable provender, as they had taken to it immediately. Upon which the stranger led Valentine into the farther chamber, preceded by Launcelot and Sebastian, with torches.

After having re-illuminated the tripod lamp that was suspended from the ceiling, and which has been extinguished by the hawk in his flight—and thrown fresh fuel on the fire, they all sat indistinctively round the stirring blaze, and with a degree of cheerfulness that infused such satisfaction and pleasure in our Falconer's mind, that he had not experienced for some time before.—The Cavalier observing this, began to laugh over the surprize and alarm that the hawk had occasioned them.—
“ But where was the fly rogue concealed

(continued he) that we did not discover him on our first search?"

" In yonder hole, no doubt (replied Valentine) in the wall. The vacuity made purposely for him by the deceased Monk, in gratitude for the food he has for this month past afforded us. Therein stands his nocturnal perch, and, alarmed, I suppose, by the disturbed sounds he heard without—the glimmering of the torches, or, perhaps, by my well known voice, he sprung from his shelter, and occasioned the noise by his flight about the chamber that has created so much confusion among us all.—When he distinguished the light, however, approach (as has ever been his custom) he must have taken to his nest again, by which he avoided our first pursuit.—But in return, Sir Cavalier (concluded Valentine) what caused those clashing of swords, that we distinguished without; and which not only almost overcame me in sad apprehension, lest some danger might have surrounded *you*, but which, like lightning, spurred your servants from their inanimate state to fly onward, with the most determined fortitude, to participate in your supposed impending danger?"

" In good faith (replied the Cavalier) it was even thus:—

" When we had searched about both the chambers, and perceived nothing, as before (though the sounds were still strong

in our ears) we began to grope about with our swords (for the lamp that lighted us at first, was now, to our fresh surprise, extinguished) and in that act, we aroused the hawk, for he almost immediately afterwards flapped directly betwixt us both, and just struck each of us with the dimensions of his wings; and on raising our weapons to bring him down, we clashed them against each other in the attempt.”—

“ Poor fellow (said Valentine, tenderly stroking his hawk, that still continued perching on his fist) thou hast then narrowly escaped, indeed!—This had been an ungracious return for all thy diligence and labour.—But come (taking up a lark that lay with the wild fowl upon the table) thou shalt once more go quietly to roost, and have this gorge—aye—and if thou likest it, sweet bird, another too, for the fatigue and apprehensions you must have experienced.”—

“ Why, I should imagine, (said the stranger, with a significant look) that thou hadst been born of one of our first nobles, by the love and knowledge you entertain and possess of falconry.—Though, in good faith, you look more like some Count’s fair daughter than his son.

Valentine, on this, took the opportunity of concealing a certain suffusion that had spread itself over his face, by putting the hawk to roost, and then returned composedly to his seat.

“ One thing, my boy (said the Cavalier) have I neglected to ask of you—prithce, inform me of your name.”—

“ Valentine, my Lord.”

“ Valentine!—marry—the first name in love’s calendar.—Now, youth, I pray thee, answer me this again: From whence?”

“ Pardon me, my Lord.—But I beseech thee, first grant me reply for reply.—May I therefore know your name also?”—

“ Not now, youth—for certain reasons I would delay this answer. In a few short days, however, you shall know all that you wish to know.—Therefore, I prithce, answer me—from whence?”—

“ Once more, pardon me, my dear Lord.—To my name, I have frankly answered—to aught more, I cannot—no—not for life’s value. And what to me is in my mind more estimable—the loss of your proffered friendship and protection.”

The entrance of the two servants (who having gained a scent of the game which the recess was provided with, and having a very violent inclination to be made partakers of the same) terminated a discourse which might have probably untwisted the knot of friendship that had just been cemented betwixt the Minstrel and the stranger.—

“ The horses, my Lord (said the foremost) are all secure, and still brousing on the leaves of the tree, as though they had had no provender for a week.”

“ If it is even so (said the Cavalier jocosely, for perceiving that his interrogatories were not perfectly consonant to the feelings of Valentine, he wished to give another turn to the subject)—If it is even so, we will have a good feed likewise;—therefore, take these birds, spit them with your swords.—No bad—no dishonourable employ, my boys, to soldiers, who eat where they can, and fight when they can; and quickly roast them before that cheering fire. The command was no sooner given, than obeyed; and the wild fowls were instantly spitted, and very soon afterwards devoured. The Cavalier, during this ceremony, seated himself with Valentine and Sebastian at one table, whilst Launcelot and the others did the same round another.—The minstrel, however, declined his share of the repast, for the edge of his appetite had been blunted by the vicissitudes of the day. He, nevertheless, gave a good account to his surrounding friends in another way; for taking up his lute, he sung, accompanied by the most exquisite harmony of his celestial-attuned instrument, the Syracusan war song, as chaunted in the days of yore.

Our stranger was so enraptured with the excellencies of Valentine, that he would not have perceived the dawn of day, creeping through the avenues of this unhallowed recess, if Sebastian had not reminded him

of—" *Meet me on the first evening in the month of April, at Messina's port.*"

The knight, on this, started from his enchantment, and after charging Sebastian with the care of the chests, and Launcelot also with the care of the lute and the hawk, he posted with all speed out of the cave; and after first vaulting with such ease and dignity on his steed;

As if an angel dropt down from the clouds,
To turn and wind a fiery *Pegasus*,
And 'twitch the world with noble horsemanship;

and then ordering Sebastian to assist Valentine behind him, he ascended like an arrow up the steep sides of the glen, and soon found himself at the cottage-door of old Launcelot, where Mopsa was anxiously attending him, he having so far outgone his appointed time of reaching there, by the delay occasioned in the Monk's recess.

Such was the rapidity with which the stranger had hurried therefrom, that Valentine had no opportunity left to make the least mournful reflection upon the dismal fate of the wretched Monk, as he trod over his miserable remains.—Torture superfluous!—For, alas! poor wanderer, thou hadst reflections mournful enough of thine own, without agonizing thy distracted bosom with the miseries and destinies of others; and now—

Sweetest Santa-Maria—fairest rose in all Italia's flowery plains—for awhile—Farewell.

CHAPTER VII.

They say miracles are past ;—

I have heard, but not believ'd, the sp'rits o' th' dead
May walk again.

SHAKSPEARE.

NOW, to return to the Lord Rodolph, whom we have quitted for a short month, or so:—

It was on a fine morning, in the middle of January, when the Count proceeded onward, with a composed and undaunted humour, to take possession of his castle, which was not quite two leagues from Bellito.

As for Drosi, he was punctually in the same disposition as his master—experiencing, for his part, no terror from what he had heard, and thinking, in fact, of no greater pleasure than that which should hereafter arise from the comforts and indulgence of good eating, and plentiful drinking. But as for Carlo, he thought and felt otherwise:—in the first place, he did not well digest the idea of leaving the Countess, and particularly Sylvia, behind; not, however, entertaining the least surmise (for his heart was too well cased against such mean suspicions) that Franco-lisse could extinguish a flame which had been so long and stably burning;—but that in Sylvia he lost a companion, and one, not only strongly attached to his person, but also to his opinion, counsel, and principles.—In the next place—he now

conceived, that they were on the point of inheriting an ancient castle, where nothing but dreary chambers and subterraneous caverns were to be met with—and hearing all the strange marvellous stories that had been related by Francolisse, he had formed another idea—that its towers were tottering—that its old walls bent beneath the iron hand of Time—that the buttresses were mouldering or rotten—that the ramparts were only the midnight rendezvous of ghosts and spirits—that murdered beings held familiar converse on the platform, and to each other told—and said—as how, and how—and when, and when—they had received such and such a stab—up and down—in and out—when and where—why and wherefore—that the Chapel contained some perturbed souls (whose fiery breaths re-illuminated the tapers, as expressed by Francolisse) and which would haunt them in the most secret chambers of the Castle; and that the old cymetery vomited forth the collected bones of those departed nobles, who had for ages been buried therein—In short, such monstrous images occurred to his wild enthusiastic imagination, that he was ever and anon dubious whether or no to leap from his horse, and fly to the adjacent thickets—ready to stand the hazard of being cut to pieces by banditti, or to be devoured by wolves, rather than proceed to the castle.

The nearer and nearer that the cavalcade advanced on their short journey, the stronger did Carlo's fears increase; nor could the Lord Rodolph refrain from smiling alternately at the Page's terrors, and the dry humour of Drofi. On their way to the Castle, Carlo sustained the propensity of his uncle, equally by his natural jocularity and his inordinate superstition—At times, he amused him, and the Count also, with the liveliest effusions of his honest disposition, and eccentric imagination; for the lad occasionally attempted to divert his uncle, that he might blunt the poignant sensations he so feelingly experienced himself—First launching forth into the most entertaining stories; and then, on a sudden, recurring to the substantial agonies of his mind, he endeavoured to raise his kinsman's imagination to the most awful pitch of gloomy horror, with doleful histories of dreams, ghosts, magic, and sorcery.—Particularly—as Carlo rode along, he consoled his uncle, with solemnly assuring him, that when death should terminate his mortal existence, his spirit should ever prove favourable to him—his beloved Sylvia—and the good Count and Countess of Rodolph—and, in short, with the whole human species—“ In no shape whatever (concluded poor Carlo) will I oppress or harass the quick, guiltless or not—but flutter harmlessly through the

regions of air, and contentedly await the last awful and decisive day—the day, my dear uncle, when——.”

“ Hold your damned nonsense (replied Drossi, interrupting Carlo in the very marrow of his observations)—you—you flutter harmlessly through the regions of air?—you be——. Marry, what mean you by the regions of air?—What!—would you be flying about on an old house-worn, dunghill-decayed, stinking broom-stick, like that witch, your mother? Why, thou wilt speed to thy grand-fire, the devil, as soon as the breath is out of thy body—aye—and all those, I hope, that are in any wise near akin unto thee—thou dying ember of witchcraft and superstition! Old Beelzebub, with his brimstone-tinted beard, will hold thee fast, my boy—He won’t mind your plunging and whining, your tossing and kicking, no more than he has done your mother’s. Though, by my truth, I have heard she could plunge and toss, even with the very best of us here—No, no, he will keep thee where you ought to be—in sound infernal limbo, and all those, I hope, likewise, who ever belonged to you—aye, or could shake a kindred little finger with thee—or that howling witch, my most damnably-begotten sister!”—

“ Lord have mercy, uncle (replied Carlo, turning up the whites of his eyes) upon your poor soul, as I see that you expect

none—for, if my poor mother and myself are to be damned, as you say, you also, according to your own impious wishes, must certainly be one of the number.”

“ Hold your tongue, you sorry cur (retorted Drofi) or I'll crack your knave's scone—But—hem!—talk of the devil, they say, and there's something belonging to his dæmonship that is sure to appear—Look yonder—see! he has already hoisted up his black flag, to welcome your approach!”—

Here—a black banner was discovered, sure enough, waving at the top of one of the south turrets. At this time, they had just begun to ascend the first acivity that led to the castle. The sun had shone so full upon their faces, till they had turned off from the main road which directly led to Martorano, into a side plain, that winded off towards the fortress, that none of them could perceive this ill-boding presage of their reception till now.

This was a discovery that gave full latitude to the supernatural credence of Carlo: and he was on the point of recapitulating and commenting on what Franco-lisse had related concerning the dancing of these same black banners from one turret to another, like black-birds hopping from one branch to its neighbour, and other most marvellous conceits, when he was interrupted, to his great disappointment, by

Lord Rodolph, who thus addressed him on the occasion, in an accent that carried with it infinite solemnity, and in an air of command, that denoted implicit obedience to what he was about to enjoin:

“ Carlo, if you expect still to enjoy my friendship or confidence, or to find a quiet and comfortable asylum in my hereditary Castle; or, to receive a dower from me with Sylvia in marriage, you must also abandon these base, idle, and unmanly fears, the moment you put footstep into yonder fortress.—By farther indulging them, they may not only ultimately affect your own reason, but the senses also of my brave and most staunch followers;—for the ignorant, though ever so naturally courageous in the field, may in the closet incline and yield themselves to terrors, (though born of the merest trifles) if they once imbibe a marvellous creed like your’s. By a continuance, therefore, of these your idle discourses and comments, upon supernatural causes and events, they will in time imbibe your ways of thinking, and at length, turn out disaffected to me and to my service—they will all abandon my castle, lest they should be carried off by spirits, ghosts, and devils—and leave me to regret that I have lost men of such tried proof and integrity, whose places I cannot probably afterwards supply—but in their stead, perhaps, get a horde of intriguers about me, who may plot and contrive

black cell—mark me well, Carlo—the black cell (that was of old—as the records of our castle tell us—the prison-house of the ancient foes of the Lords Rinaldo) and whose stair-case is black with age, and so dark at noon day—it was necessary, as they say, a century ago, to have lighted torches to find the way upward—such also (concluded Rodolph) is the lodging I have in my mind's eye for you, boy, in case of an obstinate disobedience to my wishes and commands.”

“ I recollect my lord (observed Drossi) of hearing, also, some horrible adventures relating to this black room, with the black stair-case; and likewise, of the old lords Rinaldo making their prisoners eat black bread, and drink black water; and have black men, dressed up like black devils, to serve up these their delicate black dishes.”

“ My good Drossi (replied Rodolph) let us drop these idle subjects, of devils and spirits—alike, seriously or gloomily inclined, they are not worthy to fall from a soldier's tongue; and as for your nephew yonder, he must henceforward act up also to the dignity of a man—he has been led, it is true, to talk and think of these unnatural romances, from early habit and education.—Perseverance, however, and a little resolution, will shortly conquer all such ridiculous propensities—from what (some four years ago) that had come be-

against me and mine, and endeavour at last to turn me out of mine own hive.—Such things as supernatural agencies and immaterial beings have now long gone by; and if there is any thing extraordinary occurs, when we gain our seating in the castle, yield rather to a *secret fear*, than by betraying an open one, disturb the minds of those, who though inwardly polished by the smooth workmanship of virtue, are roughly set in the case of ignorance.—The black banners may be raised as easily as tapers could be extinguished—but I well know, however, the secret springs, causes, and channels of these supposed phænomena, and shall, with our joint activity and industry, be soon enabled to discover the cunning intriguers concerned therein.—Whom, when detected, I will deliver to all the torments of the Inquisition;—the torture and the flames shall be their inevitable and most horrible doom.

“ Thus far, Carlo, have I spoken to you friendly and mildly—still continue, therefore, to keep me so by your prudence and obedience.—But, on the contrary, youth, if you ever attempt to run wide from what I have admonished, either by endeavouring to sow or nurture the seeds of terror and superstition in the minds of our men at arms—then, indeed, I will render your future existence as miserable as slavery, and the most hideous mildewed dungeon, can make it. The

fore my own observation, and from what I have been since told by the chevalier d'Arcos, there is no doubt, but what some invisible, though mortal agent, is in or about the castle—their artful intrigues at first may lead a weak mind to suppose, that they proceed from some preternatural phenomena; but when we draw aside the thin—unsubstantial veil of their artifices, we laugh and ridicule those very trifles, which but an hour or so before had given us such real terrors.”

Poor Carlo had listened with attention, though not, perhaps, with much conviction, to the philosophical discourse of Lord Rodolph; at the same time also, he gave a close ear to the terrible denunciation of the black dungeon, if he ever attempted to converse upon the only familiar subject he was a scientific master of. This part he treasured up in his memory with fear and horror—The lad (as we have observed before) was far—far from being a coward—he was a superstitious coward indeed; but not an atom of it so when opposed to objects material. He was, therefore, determined to summon all his worldly courage, to bear him through this present critical and inauspicious juncture of his life—still keeping in his thoughts the prophecy of his mother—“That he should
“ see and hear strange things about his
“ twenty-third year; and that all this
“ should take place in a strange castle.”—

One part of the prophecy had already been fulfilled, for he had *heard* strange things indeed—and what appeared to him still worse, he now reduced it to a certainty that he should shortly *see* them also.

CHAPTER VIII.

This castle had a pleasant seat ; the air
Nimble and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses.

I'll make the statue move, indeed, descend,
And take you by the hand, but then you'll think,
Which I protest against, I am assisted
By wicked powers.

SHAKESPEARE.

NOTWITHSTANDING all those secret fears that Carlo had imbibed, and was strongly nourishing more and more in his bosom ; still he could not refrain from launching forth into eulogiums on the majestic and venerable structure that he saw just before him—proudly situate, as it was, on the solid rock, and sided on the east and west by extensive forests ; whilst the river Savuto, with which it was flanked (but which was at present concealed from his sight) loudly bellowed on his ears, denoting the rapid force its body contained ; and again, the full prospect of the massy gate which fronted him, with its southern aspect, displayed the general strength that every where coated this huge and formidable castle.

When the cavalcade approached the great gate, it was unclosed by Gabot, who

conveyed the ponderous key which had formerly been restored and made use of by the good Chevalier d'Arcos, on a former occasion, about four years ago. As it was slowly and gradually opened, however, with a loud and grating clash from its solid iron hinges, Drofi, in his usual dry significant manner, observed to Rodolph—

“ Do you mark, my lord—Notice the
 “ knocker, and see that grim lion's head
 “ over it—that was not there when we left
 “ it last—No, by St. Marco was it! (continued Drofi) some one hereabout has had
 “ some leisure on their hands—aye, and
 “ ingenuity too in their heads, to have
 “ made this addition to the main portal.”

Carlo on hearing and observing this, forgot the severe injunctions that had been laid on his curiosity, and was going to launch forth into his old habitual loquacious superstitious stile, when Drofi checked him, by suddenly clapping his hand over his mouth, and facetiously whispered these magic words in his ear:

“ Beware, nephew, of the infernal black
 “ chamber.”

Rodolph looked steadfastly at the lion's head, and after surveying it with much attention, he somewhat seriously observed, “ I did not suppose, indeed, the *fellows*
 “ had so much ability, to execute a piece
 “ of workmanship (however ordinary it
 “ may be) thus highly finished, and curi-
 “ ously conceived.”

After they entered the great gate, Rodolph had again occasion thus to observe unto Drofi:

“ The villains, I perceive, have not been idle ; but I can only account for this their industry, with the sole view of passing away that inactive life, they must otherwise have carried on for such a long time past.”

“ What villains (said Carlo, aside, to Drofi) are they, that my lord alludes to?”

“ I know no more than you do, at present (returned he); though I have some reason to suppose I shortly shall—Still, if I do, *you* most certainly will not; therefore be silent. Don’t be inquisitive, boy, for if the Count overhears you—mark me—you understand—humph! the black chamber.”

“ Observe, Drofi (continued Rodolph) notice the winding ascent to the ramparts on the east and west sides, that have been propped and repaired, since we last were here. The rock seems newly cut, where the steps have been mended; at that time the shrubs were growing between the stones and the grass was knee deep. They are plucked and shaved like one of our Neapolitan greens—the fellows have saved us some pains, and it is but fair, that we should one day repay them for the same.”

“ May I ask, my lord (said Drofi, apart) excuse me for the liberty—but may I know, who you conjecture these same vil-

lains to be? Pardon me—but your lordship knows my fidelity and secrecy may be depended on.”

“ Seek not to know at present (replied Rodolph); I would entrust you, Drosi, sooner than any soul I have about me; perhaps, however, you will shortly know as much as I do myself; but for the moment, I will not have any questions put or answered, lest they should find a chance circulation among my other domestics. In short, my good fellow, you cannot have so soon forgot the reasons that I lately gave for the same, in my late discourse with your nephew.”

If Drosi's curiosity was not satisfied by this answer, his honest pride at least was gratified with it; and the uniform fidelity he had, in all seasons bore his lord, was more strengthened, if possible, than ever, by this instance of his promised confidence.

When they had reached the outer courtyard, in which was convenient stabling for fifty horses, and a spacious gallery for the castle retinue, Lord Rodolph appointed Gabot first to see the cattle and his fellow domestics properly taken care of, and then to attend him in the great hall.

As they passed through the armoury, the Count was at first greatly surprised to see all the old war-horse furniture, the shields, casques, helmets, faulchions, spears, &c. as bright and as splendidly fur-

bished up, as when they first came from the smith's forge, two centuries ago. When the fever, however, of his first surprise was over, he involuntarily burst into a loud strain of laughter, and looking about, exclaimed—"By my future salvation, I cannot refrain from smiling at all this I see about me—the fellows have a mind to make me laugh at their intrepid assurance:--Well be it so---but by the faith of a true Neapolitan, they shall shortly be well paid for the diversion they have so unexpectedly provided me!"

They now passed through the wide avenue of orange and lime-trees, that led to the great court-yard. When Rodolph, however, had proceeded thus far, he halted, as though he had been arrested by the hand of some supernatural genius; his already palid countenance turned still nearer the livid hue of death. He stretched forth his right hand, and placed himself in such a horrible attitude, as though hell itself, and all the devils therein, had burst forward to grapple with him. When his speech, however, revived, he frantically exclaimed—"In heaven's name, what is this I see before me?"

"A statue (replied Carlo, surprised and trembling all over)—a statue, my lord, that's all."

"You lie, slave (thundered out Rodolph, and at the same time felling him prostrate and senseless to the ground) it is no statue

—it is my brother—the old prince Rinaldo!
 —What?—say—do I not see him look—
 breath—speak—see—see—he shakes his
 truncheon at me—descends from his proud
 charger, and leaps from that marble pedestal.
 By heaven! injured man—I'll not
 look farther on thee—but if Contarini ever
 sees thee—well full well—let *him* look to
 it *most*.” Upon which, he beckoned Drofi
 to follow him, and hurried forward to the
 great hall.

Drofi, as we said before, was a man
 possessed of great personal courage and
 presence of mind. In short, he was a
 man,

That apprehended death, no more dreadfully but as
 A drunken sleep! careless, reckless, and fearless

Of what's past, present, or to come. SHAKS.

Notwithstanding this, he was more than
 ordinarily surprised at this more than or-
 dinary incident. He dearly loved his mas-
 ter though he had many reasons to be con-
 vinced that he had been formerly guilty
 of several irregularities and extravagances.
 Still he never believed that he had either
 stained his hand or his honour with the dis-
 honourable knife of a midnight assassin; nor,
 in fact, did he believe it *now*, great as pre-
 sent appearances might warrant such a
 foul suspicion.

Rodolph, he knew, by frequent experi-
 ence, was a brave captain. As a fair, open,
 courageous soldier, therefore, himself, no-

thing but ocular demonstration could convince him that his lord, who had fought so nobly in the field of battle, for his king and country, would stoop to exercise the mean, ignoble, unfair craft of a clandestine murderer.

Drossi, just at this critical moment, conceived it a happy circumstance (for saving when intoxication conquered his reasoning powers, they were in general strong, acute and ready) that his lord's retinue had been elsewhere engaged, and that his nephew, Carlo, had received a blow, which made him insensible of what afterwards passed. He loved the boy, and knowing long his loquacious, superstitious disposition so well, he also knew that the black chamber must ultimately have been his certain fate, if he had ever inadvertently betrayed the mental perturbation, and subsequent frantic behaviour of his noble master.

Drossi, nevertheless, was staggered for some moments, what to think of this strange business himself. The first thing he did, to be convinced, was to examine the equestrian statue before him; he attentively regarded the features, and to the best of his recollection, found in them a wonderfully strong resemblance of the old prince Rinaldo. Still they undoubtedly appeared to him, as merely chiselled out from white marble. Then, farther to satisfy his curiosity, and confirm his opinion, he climbed the pedestal, and placing his hand on the

right cheek, found it as cold as marble—(for nothing more than marble we can hardly suppose it to be)—felt the statue all over, from head to foot, from top to toe; nay, the proud charger did not escape his scrutinizing touch; but still, all were cold, durable, and inanimate, as marble.

Drosi, being thus far satisfied within himself, began to consider, what in St. Marco's name, could have induced his lord to behave himself in such a mad and unaccountable manner? Then bethinking himself again, he conceived it would be most prudent, first to set about recovering his poor prostrate nephew. On this he pulled a flagon of lachryma christi from his pouch, (the best restorer, as he thought, on this, and every other occasion) and applied its contents to his mouth. This precious infallible balsam had its desired effect, much indeed to Drosi's satisfaction; and perceiving re-animation work through every part, he could not in justice help bestowing another compliment to this said lachryma christi, in addition to those thousands and thousands that he had heaped upon it before.

As Carlo began to recover his senses and his speech, Gabot came up, and on enquiring what ailed the page? Drosi answered, that he had met with an accident from a fall, over one of the projecting stones; but that his old doctor, Sir La chry-

ma Christi, had happily brought him about again.

“ It is false, uncle,—(replied Carlo, in a faint voice).”

“ Humph! nephew—recollect the black chamber (returned the other).”

“ True—true—aye—I recollect, yes—yes.—I recollect—my fall, as you say, uncle, over the—the—what did you say?—The projecting stones! Good—aye—the projecting stones. In very truth, my fall came so suddenly and heavily withal, that I had nearly forgot it had been over the projecting stones.”

Drosi could not help smiling at this pliable answer of poor Carlo. His satisfaction, however, was still farther increased, when he discovered no external injury on his nephew. He had been only stunned with the blow. But when his uncle proposed that he should retire to couch, he positively declined it, and declared that he would keep with his comrades wherever they might be for that day.

CHAPTER IX.

Now does he feel

His *secret* murders sticking on his hands;

Now minutely revolts upbraid his faith-breach;

————— Now does he feel his title

Hang loose about him, like a giant's robe

Upon a dwarfish thief—

SHAKESPEARE.

DROSI having left Gabot with Carlo to superintend the refreshments, &c. of their fellow domestics—having well provided

themselves (as it should have been observed before) with viands and wines of all dishes and sorts, before they set out from Bellito—he went in search of his Lord, whom he found sitting disconsolately in the middle of the great hall, expecting his presence.

As Drofi approached his master, carrying with him as he went an attitude of sorrow, and a countenance full of enquiring anxiety after his health, Rodolph thus faintly observed to him—

“ My good fellow, I perceive your anguish on my account—for that same anguish I thank you—I am now, it is true, somewhat ill at heart, but shall, I hope, amend by the morrow. In the meantime, I will for this first day retire me to some private chamber—no matter as now, for its conveniency or inconveniency. The adjacent town of Martorano will supply us in the morning with what necessaries of furniture and accommodation, as may on our early investigation of the present state of the castle, appear deficient. At all events, I will sleep on the eastern side, this night.”

“ But, why not, my lord (observed Drofi) excuse me, but why not sleep on the other side? The western part, I believe, was where the ancient Princes Rinaldo held their abodes and councils.”

“ No matter for that (returned Rodolph) I have my reasons—Be satisfied now, and to-morrow you shall learn farther. In the

mean time, I depute yourself and Gabot, whom next to you, I regard with the utmost confidence, to superintend the domestic concerns of the castle. And—mark me, Drofi—I conjure you, on no consideration whatever, whether on life or death, to suffer a single man to depart these walls, without my special concurrence.”

On this, they crossed to the eastern point—though almost at every step, Rodolph turned his penetrating eye toward the chapel, where, with increased wonder and amazement, he could distinguish the tapers still burning through the crevices of the door—He took no notice of this, at present, to Drofi, whom he intended hereafter to make his most active agent in jointly discovering all these united mysteries—but ascended the steps that winded into the gallery, which brought them to the range of apartments formerly occupied by the principal captains and officers, who had fought under the banners of the ancient and magnificent Lords Rinaldo.

Here, upon inspection, they found all the chambers far from being decayed, or in disorder; but, on the contrary, elegantly fitted up, and suited with accommodations, as though preparations had been made for their arrival, months previous to its commencement—Rodolph, without expressing any farther useless surprize, then separately examined the chambers over as they ran; and at last fixed upon the farthest one

of all for himself, and appointed the three adjoining ones for Drossi, Gabot, and his page, Carlo. This done, he ordered the former to go and see that all was right among the domestics; and, after desiring him to bring him some little refreshment, to observe that every one was safely housed before midnight, he wished him a present farewell.

It would only be fatiguing our reader's patience, to follow the melancholy train of reflections that started in Rodolph's mind, when he was left silently alone. In fact, it would be almost a recapitulation of past described events. The equestrian statue, however, of the old Prince Rinaldo, disturbed, perplexed, astonished, and actually confounded the very foundation of his senses. It shook them from their very centre. Rodolph had all along imagined, that his two desperadoes, Bernardine and Goddard, were the recluses of the castle. This supposition, now, however, appeared doubtful—nay, almost impossible—could they—meanly-ungifted by nature, for any other employ but that of arms, have carved from marble the statue of his brother?—incredible! Even if nature and art had assisted them with their supereminent qualities, where could they have caught the resemblance—how chiselled out the exact, striking, living features of old Lord Rinaldo?—features so perfectly—wonderfully consonant as to make him lose himself, and

even to debase his arm, by striking senseless an honest youth, who had spoke from the pure simplicity of his uncontaminated heart—

If not Bernardine and Goddard (thought Rodolph, again perplexing himself still more and more, as he waded through this intricate labyrinth of mysterious conjecture)—if not Bernardine and Goddard, who could have thus so ingeniously carved this extraordinary and skilful piece of workmanship? At this moment, Reflection stand my friend—Manfredi—aye, Manfredi—he was a man deeply versed in all arts and sciences—perhaps it is him that has done all this—*He* was master indeed sufficient to perfect it all—But hold—if Rinaldo's murdered—dead—and gone—how is it that Manfredi could exist? Their lives were united—their persons undivided—their thoughts unseparated—If Rinaldo fell by the bloody hands of these same clandestine ruffians, Manfredi must have fallen also—by the same token, if Manfredi was e'er overpowered by the crimson blade of dark assassination, Rinaldo's heart was probed by the self same dagger. For if Rinaldo had survived this Manfredi, he would have avenged his death; and again, if Manfredi had outlived Rinaldo, he would have stirred up Report with her thousand tongues, to circulate his young Lord's murder through every distant corner of the habitable world.

When Drosi entered the menial hall, he found all his brother domestics anxiously waiting for him alone, to sit down to a plenteous repast. He heartily joined them, though not with that wonted degree of hilarity as always attended him, till now, on these cheerful and convivial occasions. When all, however, were satisfied, and the generous glass had gone trebly round, he rose somewhat solemnly from the table, and in an accent of much unaccustomed gravity, he thus addressed them round.

“ Brother soldiers and servants, I have received most special orders from our Lord Rodolph, to enjoin you all and severally not to stir out of these castle walls, without his express concurrence. The Count is at present somewhat slightly indisposed; but will, on the morrow, give farther directions in person. In the mean time, see after your particular apartments in the gallery over the stables; and agree among one another respecting them, as well and as friendly as you possibly can for this day. At supper time I will meet you here again.”——

This brave handful of men, all knew, that on these occasions, Drosi was the Count's viceroy; and therefore obeyed his commands with the same ready cheerfulness as they would have done their superior officer. They having departed, Drosi selected some of the choicest dainties for Lord Rodolph; and then, accompanied by

Carlo and Gabot, they proceeded towards his chamber.

As they all jogged along the great hall, Gabot jocosely observed to Drofi—" I marvel if the cellar you once so accidentally and marvellously discovered, is so well furnished with the good old choice lachryma christi, as it was wont to be?"

" In good faith, I hope so (replied Drofi as merrily) at all events, Gabot, we will try in the morning. In the mean time, I hope also that we shall be entertained with a little of that music we were so unexpectedly treated with before; not but that I wish likewise, we could have the pleasure of seeing the musicians, as well as hearing the music. It is a great pity, methinks, they should not partake in our conviviality, and taste our lachryma christi for the pains they are at, and the pleasure they must afford us!"

" Heaven forbid (added Carlo) that we should either hear the music, or see the musicians; for no doubt the sounds proceed from some ærial spirits, who are playing over this castle, to soothe and repose some hapless beauteous virgin's ghost, who may have been untimely cut off by the bloody hand of a merciless ruffian, from whom she preferred the rude blow of death, rather than the loss of spotless chastity.

Both Drofi and Gabot, laughed loudly at this superstitious simplicity of Carlo;

and on the former's turning round, he exultingly cried out, pointing to the chapel door—"By St. Marco, I have now strong hopes of finding the old lachryma christi stored up as plentifully as ever—to hear our choice music again: for—

"Behold, the tapers in the chapel seem to burn as briskly, and as freshly, as they did four years ago!"

If this discovery had such a trifling effect on Drofi and Gabot, it afforded Carlo the most sensible and torturing concern, both in mind and body. His countenance became white as the marble statue, and his limbs were shook with the fever of an ague. Even if he had dared to express this electric acuteness of his feelings, he could not have done it. The sight of the still burning tapers were almost as dreadful to his weak and credulous imagination, as the ideas he now so dreadfully entertained of the threatened black chamber. Though he could not speak, still however, he could think, and the direful thought was—the prophecy of his mother!

They now ascended the gallery, that led to lord Rodolph's chamber; where they found him stretched on his couch, uncommonly pale and dejected. After he had sparingly partook of the dainty refreshments that had been brought him; and distinguished the assiduity and concern of poor Carlo, he beseeched his pardon, for

the blow he had in his passion bestowed upon him. This condescension was a balsam that the boy did not expect, for the injury he had received; and overpowered by its healing qualities, he kneeled down on the side of his Lord's couch, and bedewed his outstretched hand with the sincerest effusion of tearful acknowledgment, as ever escaped the eye of Christian forgiveness.

Lord Rodolph after having repeated his former commands to Drosi, wished them all for the present farewell. Then, as they proceeded along the farther range of apartments, the latter pointed out to his companions those that were respectively allotted to each by their lord's command. Carlo was superlatively happy in being fixed so close to his uncle and Gabot. The latter he well knew, did not fear the devil himself, the other, not even the devil, or hell also, and all the devils likewise in it.

Upon this, they returned to the menial hall, where after having spent some hours in general conviviality, they set jovially down to supper. Drosi and Gabot, however, were rather disappointed in not having their mirth heightened by a serenade, as they had expected. If it proved a disappointment however, to them, it was a source of exquisite comfort and happiness to honest Carlo.

CHAPTER X.

————— I'll startle you,
 Worse than the sacring bell; —————
 ————— 'Tis much he dares,
 And to that dauntless temper of his mind,
 He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour
 'To act in safety. SHAKESPEARE.

IN the morning when Drofi, Gabot, and the page, attended the Lord Rodolph, they found his indisposition encreased to an alarming height. The former immediately proposed dispatching a messenger to Bellito, for the Countess Isabella, and for some medical assistance to Martorano. The Count on this faintly enquired, if they had heard any noises, in the night, over the castle?

"None, my good Lord," they all replied.

"Then for the present, I will not have the Lady Isabella sent for; but if all remains serene and quiet, she shall be dispatched for in a week or so—Though mark me, not else upon your lives. See, Drofi, that none depart from these castle walls, as you value my friendship and confidence. As for assistance medical, I'll have none as yet—ye three shall be my present—sole physicians. I'll have no poisonous drugs administered to my parched feverish lips. Sit ye all before me—I have something of import briefly to communicate."

These last sentences were pronounced in such a feeble tone, and with such palpi-

tations from the heart, as equally moved these three, as equally faithful domestics.—Carlo, in particular, lost sight of all his ridiculous—superstitious ideas; and at this sorrowful moment, would have run the devil himself, if he could, through the body, had he entered to grapple with the sinking soul of his agonized master.

When they were all seated before the couch, Rodolph thus proceeded, addressing himself chiefly to Drosi:

“My faithful old soldier, I promised you but yesterday, to make you in some measure, acquainted with the secrets I think hang over this Castle. The invisible, and, as yet, undiscovered agents of all the mysteries that have alarmed my worthy kinsman, and even astonished myself—I suspect—to be Bernardine and Goddard—Drosi you know them well, you know them to be deep designing knaves. I suspect them—to have been the cunning despoilers of the Lord Rinaldo’s immense wealth,—of mine the same—hereditarily so—for—here I swear by all the immortal saints above—and by the mortal avouchment also of Sir D’Arcos—That when I first, by right and descent, took possession of this same Castle—not gold—nor silver—were to be found therein——” Here the Count paused through weakness, a weakness, however, that afforded leisure for reflection——“This same Bernardine and Goddard, mark me, were sent by me,

on a special commission, to my Lord Rinaldo, respecting our lost, worthless, fugitive daughter, Santa-Maria. All these melancholy events are too fresh in your memory. You all know, moreover, what afterwards succeeded. I cannot recapitulate them now; soon, if my weakness and indisposition will allow it—I grow faint, and wish to be brief, therefore, oh! mark me well; I suspect, most strongly suspect, that these villains are the secret inmates of the castle. Exert all your vigilance, and I will reward you to your soul's extent. To ye three I delegate my power. Drossi being the head, till health and vigour restore me to my wonted alacrity and strength, have a strict guard upon the chapel. The tapers are still burning there, they cannot be re-illuminated but by some secret mechanism that these marauders have under their command. There, and there chiefly, is your criterion for a speedy detection. They cannot elude your vigilance and courage, even for the few hours that I may expect to join in your researches. My heart invigorates with the bare idea, to see these villains detected and punished.—Oh! damned villains! For none but villains could lay and execute a scheme so complexed—so diabolical from its very basis.”

“ It's false, Lord Rodolph—!!! ”

“ Who? who? (exclaimed the astonished, enfeebled Count, looking at all the

faces full before him) who said—It's false Lord Rodolph?"—

"Not me.—Nor me (returned Drofi and Gabot, looking somewhat surprisedly about them)."

"Nor me, by the holy virgin" (said Carlo, in a trembling voice; his hair standing of an end).

"Then (replied Rodolph, collecting himself) it must have been only a fantasy of my brain."

"Then, my gracious Lord (added Carlo) it must have been a fantasy of my brain also; excuse me, but I heard the words as plain as I now see my uncle here before me; and no doubt it must proceed from the same invisible being that warned Chevalier D'Arcos, some time ago, to depart from the castle."

"And, prithee, Sirrah (said Rodolph, knitting his brows, and greatly incensed at finding that Carlo had heard the same story as had been related to him by D'Arcos) Prithee, I say, boy, who told thee this same tale!"

"Francoliffe, my Lord, and many dreadful things beside. My heart strangely misgives me, but it will come to our turn soon to hear this same frightful warning, for I dreamt that—."

"Peace, Sirrah,—Drofi, mark me, be it one of your first employments to look after this same black chamber, I lately told you of. It must, to the best of my re-

membrane, lay above the cloisters. The massy door which leads to it, stands at that extremity of the hall which fronts to the chapel. Do you and Gabot commence your most active researches immediately, for if the villains Bernardine and Goddard, are not soon stopt in this, their alarming career, we shall have the Castle shortly deserted. Carlo shall remain with me till you return. Begone, therefore, and speedy prosperity attend you."

On their departure, Rodolph, after having once more admonished his page to have a more prudent guard over his actions and expressions; and afterwards solemnly vowing, that if he ever knew him again to give way to such idle and superstitious fears, that the black chamber should be his inevitable doom—he sunk into a profound sleep.

Drossi and Gabot having taken their morning repast with the other domestics (whom they found to be well satisfied with their night's lodging) on they trudged, thoughtless and careless, through the great hall, and from thence along the winding passage that led into the refectory. Here the former soon discovered the pannel which had, many years ago, so fortuitously and suddenly let him into the choice secrets of the wine-cellar. To make himself certain, however, that this was the identical spot, he examined about for the letter—D—but to his infinite surprise, and, to the great

merriment of Gabot (who had often before heard of the same story, and who had also shared in the jest of it, about four years ago) discovered four additional letters affixed—which were no other than those of—E V I L.

“ Ho! ho! (exclaimed Drofi, pronouncing only the last four letters over) who have we had here? Some one has had the same good fortune with myself in discovering the mysteries of this wine-cellar—and who have, like myself, cunningly cut out these letters next to mine, that they should be the sooner enabled to find it out again.

“ Who, indeed? (cried Gabot, laughing heartily) why, man, can’t you see to put all these letters together.—If you could, you would only find an old friend of your’s has succeeded you in the discovery of this secret, and who, in compliment to ancient friendship, or perhaps to save himself a little trouble, has honoured you so far, by leaving unscratched, the very same word, that ushers in both your crimes alike—Read again, and marry then you will find them altogether to be—the D, E, V, I, L—.”

“ The Devil (exclaimed Drofi in return; fixing his elbows in his sides, and making the refectory re-echo again with a sudden and vociferous shout of laughter - - -).”

“ Come, then, my friend (said Gabot, after he had enjoyed himself in the self-same strain)—Come, open this pannel, and let us descend, and see if your old compa-

nion (that is to be) has drunk up all this choice lachryma-christi; which I somewhat suspect he has—for I do not see rightly what his business in this world well can be, without that of quenching the thirst he must necessarily experience in his own sultry dominions.”

“ Ah!—good Gabot (replied Drosi) when thou goest there, I hope, from my very soul, it may also be in thy power to have frequent resort to a cellar so choice as this has proved to me.”

On this, Drosi put his shoulder to the pannel, and straight it flew open. He then descended, followed by Gabot, and spent near an hour in searching every avenue of the cellar, but, alas!—not a single flagon of lachryma-christi was to be discovered any where about!—

After they had ascended with slow and melancholy steps into the refectory again, and made fast the pannel (which seemed hinged by some sudden spring, from the velocity of its opening and closing) Gabot—(exclaimed with a deep counterfeited sigh)—“ Ah! comrade, I fear your worthy, good, old friend has taken all the choice lachryma-christi away with him to his own territories, and reserved it for his own needful occasions.”—

“ Ah! then, comrade (retorted Drosi, with his wonted dry humour)—you may think yourself superlatively happy in the idea that you will shortly have a taste of

it again—for the Devil must be a churlish being indeed, not to afford one of his most particular friends, a small portion of wine to one who, like you, my dear Gabot, has been so frequently a bosom-friend and intimate of his.”

In this unthinking manner they retorted on each other, till they reached Lord Rodolph's chamber, to relate to him what had already taken place—(most grievously indeed to poor Drofi's disappointment) and to receive farther orders.—

They found the Count just awaked from a sound slumber, and apparently much relieved, with Carlo sitting attentively—most anxiously by his side. Rodolph desired them to be seated, and after hearing Drofi's first adventure, he replied—(after a few moments' reflection)—“ It is well—I am not sorry for it.”

“ But, by St. Marco, I am (thought Drofi within himself) and heartily sorry for it too withal.”—

“ Drofi and Gabot (continued Rodolph) I know you fear no service of danger—much less one that I propose setting you about this night—let the chapel be your peculiar watch till morn—The villains cannot possibly re-illuminate the tapers, while you remain steady vigils within. Possibly, did I say?—nay, incredible—of certain they must have their secret pannels—their trap-doors, or some clandestine means to effect their intricate purposes—But—

mark me—though you catch—kill them not—bring them to me alive—tremblingly alive—that through me they may experience all the dreadful tortures that the inquisitorial power can, with its inflexible hand, inflict upon them. This be your present office—and as far (my good fellows) as relates to the mysteries that hang upon these desperate bravadoes, may it be your last.—Till the morning, therefore, farewell—Carlo will attend me——Adieu—and may prosperity attend your vigilance and fidelity.”

Carlo was pleased to his soul's extent, that Lord Rodolph had preferred him to be his inmate and companion for that night; and, in return, he entertained him with several pleasant stories, that dispelled the present heavy thoughts and anxieties which would otherwise have preyed upon his distracted imagination.

Drossi and Gabot, in the mean time, joined their comrades in the menial hall, and retiring at an early hour, with their good long sabres, and a flagon of lachryma-christi each, they posted themselves at each side of the chapel-altar, having previously extinguished all the tapers, save two, that were the nearest to them.

CHAPTER XI.

—————The midnight bell
 Did with his iron tongue and brazen mouth
 Sound *one*, unto the drowfy race of night.—SHAKS.

THE two centinels passed this whole night, not meeting with the least interruption or alarm, either from material or immaterial objects. At dawn, therefore, Drofi left Gabot to continue his watch, whilst he hastened to his Lord, to acquaint him of the same and receive his farther orders.

Rodolph's mind, agitated with the thoughts of the chapel, all night, and the unknown voice, had received little repose, and in the morning he found his fever considerably increased—Drofi's relation, however, of the silence and uninterrupted that they had experienced in the chapel, had a temporary effect and happy relief on his spirits.—

Ah! then, my faithful fellow (said Rodolph, faintly but comfortedly) it must be as I have conjectured, and all these *seeming mysteries* must be the concealed deeds of these dark and invisible intriguers—for— if, Drofi (continued the Count) these tapers were formerly re-illuminated by some supernatural agency—why is not that self-same agency vested with equal powers to effect tantamount wonders now, even if you and Gabot were thus present—being, as it is reported they are—invisible?—

And now, my valiant soldier, after making due grateful acknowledgments to your trusty vigilance, then to my future orders.—We will not let them have an opportunity again (it having so fallen out) of renewing our surprise and apprehension, without a certainty of their coming into our power.—Make therefore, Andruccio and Phillippello (the nearest akin to you, Carlo and Gabot, in our good esteem) in part acquainted with my suspicions, with strict injunctions to secrecy—Ye four can relieve each other, till we can find some clue that leads to this first great mystery.—By perseverance and vigilance the villains may probably be led off their guard, and precipitate themselves into our snares—Ah! woe to them whene'er they do, nay, we will prosecute watchfulness even by day—let Andruccio, therefore, relieve Gabot, and stand the first guard—then see that him and Phillippello be relieved every three hours, till twilight, when they must take the watch together, your's and Gabot's turn shall be on the morrow, and so on successively.—This done, Drosi, proceed with farther indefatigability to explore the cloisters, and every secret avenue and intricate winding where it is possible the villains can probably conceal themselves from our external view and knowledge.

Drosi having taken his leave, the Count
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and Carlo set down to their morning repast. Rodolph then seated himself near the window, and enjoyed one of the most beautiful prospects, that the eye of man could possibly survey.—A prospect, however, that notwithstanding all its romantic charms, often cost him a deep and poignant sigh.

Gabot being relieved by Andruccio, he now accompanied Drossi down the hall, where after some time, and with great difficulty, they at length got open the massy door, that evidently led into the cloisters; here, after exploring every dark passage and intricate winding, they found themselves at the mouth of an old gate, black with age, which was only fastened by a long iron-latch. This they easily lifted up, and discovered themselves apparently in the cymetry of the Rinaldo family;—here again they examined every where attentively about, could discern nothing either seemingly marvellous or mysterious. All was gloomy, silent, and awful. The monuments of that noble house, were regularly ranged from the right to the left, of this magnificent charnel-house, according to the earliest and different periods that they became deceased. Statues of white marble, representing the Princes and Princesses of Rinaldo, were carved recumbent on a stately black monument; some separately, others united—some with their hands raised piously to heaven—others

with their gauntlets and daggers in their hands—armed in knightly habits, with their cotes depainted in ancient shields. On the bodies also of these monuments, were carved in various niches, the leading saints of the Roman Calendar. In short, every thing around evinced the most gloomy grandeur, and struck both our adventurers (hardy as they were) with a lively glow of awe and admiration.

To be brief, Drofi and Gabot, after having pryed every where about, could distinguish nothing of any farther importance; excepting indeed a *large pondrous bell*, that depended from the dome of the cymetry; the same awful herald, no doubt, that had often announced through these dreary avenues, the approaching remains of those departed souls, that now lay enheaped mingled in dust and corruption.

Having quitted this receptacle of death, this melancholy tell-tale of decay; they proceeded to search after the black chamber that Rodolph had so lately alluded to; but notwithstanding the most diligent researches, no such a chamber (particularly or pointedly answering to that close description) was to be found.—They went indeed through a range of chambers (or rather cells) that might have been formerly inhabited, and, probably so, by a society of secluded monks, from the situation and appearance of the place. The stalls appeared once

to have been adorned with ancient carvings, and the walls it was true, were all and indiscriminately black with age ; but not one of them appeared to come up to the exact account of that described by Rodolph.

On their return to the Count, this last intelligence was well digested by Carlo ; and from the brightening up of his countenance, as it was related, evidently demonstrated the gladness of his heart. When Drosi therefore, had finished the narrative of his first day's adventure, Rodolph gave fresh orders that he must still pursue his researches, and that with renewed diligence and indefatigability. For (continued he) there must *inevitably* exist some secret clue—pannel—passage—or trabochetto, in the Castle ; and, in most probability, on that very side where stand these same cloisters ; and which, if discovered, must convincingly lead to the recess where these villainous intriguers have concealed themselves—But (after a long pause of reflection)—but, that large bell—bells, it is reported, when the Chevalier D'Arcos resided here, rang spontaneously—idle conceits—effusions of a shallow brain—Spontaneously!—no—no—some still unfathomed artifice of Bernardine and Goddard. Rung, indeed, they might have done, assisted, as they were, by human hands.”

Here Carlo would have given both his ears to have rehearsed the discourse of Francolisse on this subject ; and, at the same

time, to have given the Signora Lauria's learned commentaries on these same sudden ringing of bells, had he not been speedily awed, by the continuation of Rodolph's address to his uncle.

"Drofi (continued the Count) I will have some watch placed near this same bell.—So anxious am I grown, to find from what immediate cause the ringing springs?—It is in the cymetry, you say?—Why should it be that thus they found a dead man's knell, when his decayed carcass has been rested in the ground, some ten, some score, or ten score years ago?—For why, for wherefore, say ye—to scare the *living*?—Oh! full well we know, it cannot be to scare the dead!—And now, by St. Januarius, I do swear (continued Rodolph, with the faint smile of irony on his palid countenance)—it would glad me much to hear this same bell once more ring again."——And no sooner had these words escaped his lips, when the bell *did* toll one, and that *one* in a tone so solemn, so awful, as chilled Carlo to his very soul, curdled his very blood.—It tolled in death-like accents—mournfully welcoming (as it were) some fresh resident to that dreary avenue of decay, from whence it was never more to return, in its earthy shape and substance.—As for Rodolph, and the rest, it struck them somewhat with surprise; they were astonished, indeed, for the mo-

ment, but not in the least daunted or alarmed.—The Count sat, for some little time, overwhelmed more with rage than astonishment. Recovering himself at length, he with more ordinary calmness observed, (looking seriously up in Drosi's face, and his head obliquely reclined on his clinched hand)—What can be most effectually done to unravel this artful mystery, and discover the audacious intriguers and authors of the same?—At these words again (as in apparent mockery) the lusty bugle horn was heard without, and a loud knocking was distinguished, as though reverberating from the great gate. Rodolph instantly dispatched Drosi, to learn the cause—and that with an air of such seeming unconcern, such veritable and palpable indifference, as indicated with it a fixed and future determination to repel all hereafter idle mockeries; added to an equal regret, that past puerile circumstances should ever have occasioned such present unmanly fears; now convinced, as suggested by himself before—*That artful intrigues, at first, may lead a weak mind to suppose that they proceed from some preternatural cause, but when we draw aside the thin unsubstantial veil of their artifices, we laugh, and ridicule those very trifles, which but an hour or so before, had given us such real terrors.*

CHAPTER XII.

Thus stands my state. ———

Like to a ship, that having 'scap'd the tempest,
Is straightway calm'd and boarded with a pirate.

SHAKSPEARE.

DROSI soon returned to the gallery, and relieved the surprise that the two late circumstances, combined, had visibly created. He then announced a messenger from Bel-lito, and delivered a paquet to Lord Rodolph; in which was contained a letter from Sylvia to Carlo, (for pretty Sylvia could letter well, from the joint instructions she had early received from the Ladies Isabella and Santa-Maria.)

Had the Count offered Carlo a bag full of ducats, a barony, or even the mitre of Naples, he would have refused all, for the preference of this, his dearest Sylvia's correspondence. The youth, therefore, retired to an anti-chamber, and with the most sensible joy and exultation of heart, perused and re-perused his letter, which contained the strongest professions of Sylvia's unalterable love and attachment towards him. The kind and modest attentions she had received from Francolisse, who begged hard to be strongly recommended to Carlo's present and future friendship. She also had lettered a long string of dreams, the principal of which, went to foretell a speedy and sudden death of some one in the Castle of Mastorano. These dreams, how-

ever, we will leave for Carlo to digest, twist, and torture, as his superior science and judgment may think fit.

In the mean time, Drofi and Gabot having retired to a little distance, Rodolph read as follows, from his Lady-wife:

“ My dearest Lord and Husband,

“ Urged by the sense of my own life—peace—liberty—and honour; and incited also by the fears and the declining state of our kinsmaiden Lauria’s health, I now earnestly entreat a safe and speedy escort to convey us hence unto our Castle of Martorano; for, situated as we are now (exposed by land, to the attacks of barbarous plunderers; and, by sea to the still worse attacks of the corsairs of Barbary, who now appear in formidable swarms upon the bosom of the River Crati) our future safety stands upon a frail assurance—Our good kinsman D’Arcos, will acquaint you farther—Farewell, for the present—Though absent, my thoughts are never from you.

“ Bellito.

“ ISABELLA.”

“ My Lord,

“ It is with concern I now apprize you, that a serious rebellion has broken out in Sicily, and that several parties of outlaws and robbers, taking advantage of the confusion which prevailed, particularly in the city of Messina, had embarked for that coast, and landing in distracted numbers at Fiumara, have committed the greatest cru-

elties and depredations—That several Corsairs of Barbary, also, seizing the same opportunity for plunder, were cruizing in great numbers on the Eastern Sea, and that some of these desperate pirates were now actually sailing in their tartanas down the River Crati, carrying away with them women, children, and cattle.—I have already put my small Castle in all possible state of defence, but, to obviate all dangers, your good Countess cannot be removed too soon, to the strong fortrefs of Martorano; and to your mutual cares and protection I also shall recommend my niece Lauria. To conclude, I must advise you also, to order your escort to take the bye road, which leaves the small village of Biagio on the right, the better thereby to prevent any sudden surprises.

“ Bellito.

“ D’ARCOS.”

Scarce had Rodolph finished the last letter, when Drosi was again summoned to the Castle gate, by the arrival of another messenger, and soon after that by a third—both of whom instantly rode off without attending an answer.

The contents ran as follows :

“ Count Rodolph,

“ As an old friend, and an ancient brother captain, I recommend you to look well and diligently out against all private and public enemies.—Civil war and dark conspiracy are on foot. These times have

a strong and wishful eye towards anarchy and rebellion—Report says, and firmly too withal, that a certain popular Sicilian nobleman, assisted with his well-known creatures, Contarini and Montoni (though professedly on the king's side) have stirred up this insurrection, and rebellious confusion, to injure the reputation and popularity of our right trusty viceroy, and, at the same time, by their plausible and exterior vigorous preparations, to suppress this rising tumult, to insinuate themselves so far with royalty, as to raise themselves upon the ruin of his noble and brave representative. Whilst others add, that the Duke and his party, vested as they are with such great civil and military powers in the state, will make many a good Neapolitan's shoulders smoke with blood. Their black file, holding (as they do say) many a noble and stout catholic's name. From hence, I shall speed with all dispatch, to my castle at Terracina.

“ Naples. “PIETRO FOSCARINI.”

“ Lord Rodolph,

“ Your enemies have preferred an accusation against you, before the secret council of the state, for the murder of your kinsman, Prince Rinaldo, with other great crimes and misdemeanours attached thereto—The pleadings are preparing with great speed against you, and a grand court is fixed for your arraignment—Make what

use you choose of this, but as you regard my friendship and personal safety, do me no wrong for this hasty caution.

" Naples.

" SCIPIO MONTALTO."

Here was news on news, indeed, that might have staggered the stoutest he who ever clenched a sword—It struck, at first, like electricity, to the soul of Rodolph.—But so it is, when the fierce soldier finds himself inevitably entangled in the toils of his bloody and vindictive enemy—he strides forward with desperation in his eye—resolution on his arm, determined to keep the field, or perish in the attempt—Desperation is often found to outlive the dangers of the day, when a steady valour sinks in the oblivious grasp of night—So with Rodolph; for now, pushed as he was, on the brink of extremity, he became furious at his approaching danger, and supported, also, as he was, by his own fierce courage, and the brave handful of men he had about him, he was resolved to defend his castle, till its proud walls fell upon him, and crushed him among its ponderous ruins.

And now, the late distemperature of Rodolph's soul and body both changed their natures in one short moment. The action of the mind shook away the imbecility of the other. His feverish habit, and the relaxing inactivity that had been gradually fastening themselves upon his once hardy constitution, vanished away, like gossamer when impelled by the impetuous

north wind. He now once again looked—stepped—acted, and thought like the veteran warrior—Rodolph.

The first measure that the Count adopted was that of destroying the two last letters he had received, lest some future accidental discovery of them might involve his anxious friends in ruin and disgrace. Foscarini was an old captain, and his grey hairs (Rodolph generously conceived) ought to descend to the peaceful grave unclotted with blood. Montalto was a learned counsellor of Naples, and on his security depended the well-being of a numerous offspring. This done, he dispatched an answer to D'Arcos, desiring the Ladies Isabella and Lauria to be prepared on the morrow, as he would then dispatch Carlo to escort them to Martorano castle. After which, he wrote letters of other import, the subject of which will shortly come to hand.

CHAPTER XIII.

It is one unalterable property of philosophy to make seeming strange and preternatural *phænomena* familiar, and reducible to cause and reason.—*Annotation on Shaks.*

RODOLPH, ordering his attendants to follow him, (and that with an air which denoted the matter of import he had in view) he descended quickly down the gallery stairs into the great hall, and then darting up the steps which led into the

chapel (as though resolution and dispatch were hastening hand by hand on this occasion) the Count next commanded Andruccio and Phillippello also to follow him—"For (said he) we will henceforth drop this fresh and foolish fancy of watching those blind tapers—those monastic symbols of superstition. The great consequence of the moment demands all our time and vigilance—let the villains continue in the practice of their idle whims, till we catch them in our toils; and when perchance we do, not even St. Jannarius's self shall save them."

From the hall they precipitated, (as tho' they were on the point of making a furious charge) into the inner court-yard, where stood the marble statue—Rodolph had not seen the same since the first shock he had sustained from it. He now passed it, however, with the utmost indifference and inattention, (as much as inwardly to signify—"what a very ass must I have been, to let such unsubstantial terrors overmaster the natural courage and fortitude of my temper!") As Rodolph passed the statue, Dross cautiously marked his countenance, and observing its serenity and steady composure, he now attributed his recent conduct thereat to the startling fever of the moment. Having now reached the outer court-yard, he ordered all his men to stand forth; and making them form a line, he

read aloud the letter he had received only from D'Arcos, and then afterwards harangued them, as thus:

“ From this, you perceive, my brave fellows, the danger we have to combat with, in the attacks of our external enemies; I now, therefore, exhort ye all, to preserve that unanimity among one another which is the securest chain that can ensure our lives, our liberties, and our property. If private animosities, and little mean jealousies creep unguardedly among you, then farewell to the general safety. Tho’ but an handful of men, as you are, still can we defend this castle, strongly fortified as it is, both by art and nature, against hundreds of assailants. It can yield only but to treachery. But mark me, brave comrades, that treachery I should never think of imputing to any one among you—no—thereby I mean that we have some secret enemies in the castle—concealed within some enlabyrinthed place of mechanism, that has hitherto deceived all our researches—Them we must watch, as carefully as the open foe. The former once discovered, we could the more securely defy all attacks of rebellious plunderers, or sanguinary intriguers. They will endeavour, perhaps, (as they have already done) to raise our fears, and unnerve our courage and fortitude, by idle and boisterous noises—by exciting our attention and wonder, with strange emblematical sentences, issu-

ing from secret engines, and unknown channels. These things, in weak unguarded minds are apt to produce sensations which render both situation and life a melancholy burthen to them. These cowardly yieldings, however, my brave soldiers, will never (I can well foretell) creep through the channels of your souls' best blood. Thus have I prefaced my subject, to place you on your guard. I would fain be mild and temperate with ye all; fain would live with you in fatherly esteem and soldier-like friendship.

" And now, Gabot, do you take this letter to Captain Orfini, commander of the garrison at Cosenza, and straightwith bring back all the provisions you can possibly be supplied with. Do you, Andruccio and Phillippello, take horse on the same errand, and haste to Monte-Leone. You, Michael, hence to St. Biagio, and as it stands but two leagues distance, you can double the journey by your comrades' return. Be it your joint cares, nimble-footed Laurence and Pietro, to beat the forests round, and make the browsing deer the captives of our castle. On the morrow, you shall escort Carlo to Bellito, to bring our Lady-wife, her kinsmaiden, Lauria, and Sylvia, to our fortress here. The remainder shall be stationed about our walls as we shall hereafter think fit. In the meantime, I will, with Drossi, inspect the out-

ward works, and prepare every thing for our general safety and defence.

These warlike orders and preparations seemed to give a fresh life to Rodolph, whilst he was issuing them; and fresh vigour also to the brave fellows who received them.—Each one pulled forth his sword to inspect the temper of its steel; and in mock opposition fought o'er their former battles once again. The Count, however, left them, accompanied only by Drossi and Carlo, to consult farther what was to be acted.

As they passed along, discoursing upon the late extraordinary events, they treated them now only with ridicule and mirth—what had so recently struck them, in many measures, with anxiety and surprise, now excited their utmost contempt. And—such is the effect of use upon the habit and constitution—for—by being a little accustomed to see the strangest things, and also experience those momentary anxieties which at first must accompany them, we soon become hardened to both; and as soon forget that they were ever really so—and what was once a strong substance, dwindles into a shadowy nothing.—

Such was it now with Rodolph; for in passing through the hall, the tapers were again re-illuminated as light as ever—Instead, however, of gaping and wondering as he had done before, the Count laughed heartily, which was loudly re-echoed by Drossi,

and somewhat faintly by Carlo—for even the latter, by use and habit, had become a little more callous to these strange sights—Rodolph, however, briefly observed on the occasion—“ That the villains had been at their old tricks, in their short absence. But if we once catch them, Drosi (added he) we will roast the rogues, till all the fat is drained from their bones—a fit combustible, and a substantial one withal, that may hereafter supply us with tapers, if future occasion should call them into use.

From this time, Rodolph treated all the clandestine noises in the Castle with silence and contempt, and by his example, taught his men to do the same. The bells indeed rung that very night, like thunder-peals—but he heeded them no more than he formerly did the bells of the Carthusian monastery. Strange voices (as before) were also heard, but he attended to them no more than the whistling of the winds, as he marched to and fro on the stout ramparts of his proud castle.

CHAPTER XIV.

When the mind's free,
The body's delicate ; the tempest in my mind
Doth from my senses take all feeling else,
Save what beats there.

SHAKESPEARE.

ON the following day, the Castle of Martorano was nearly in a complete state of

defence; Rodolph and Drofi had minutely examined the outer works, and had found them capable of resisting the most vigorous attacks. Captain Orfini had sent all the provisions the town of Cosenza could well spare. Andruccio, Phillipello, and Michael, had been equally successful—Laurence and Pietro had made a collection of nearly all the deer in the adjacent forests; so that the castle stood well provisioned for some months to come.

On the succeeding evening, Carlo was dispatched, with Laurence and Pietro, to Bellito, with strict injunctions to keep to the right of the village of St. Biagio, and not to venture from the Chevalier's Castle without strong assurances of their convoy being able to reach Martorano in safety. Rodolph's caution suggesting to him on this occasion, that should his Countess be captured on such an emergency, the enemy might retain her as an hostage for their own safety, if taken themselves.

On the following morning, however, as Michael and Riccardo were watching on the ramparts, near the eastern tower, they discovered three horsemen skulking in the forest, about two hundred yards from the walls of the fortress.—They immediately gave the alarm to the centinels around the other walks.—The Castle was soon raised—the alarm bell was rung, and the bugle-horn was sounded.

Rodolph, accompanied straight with by

Drosi, and the other men at arms stationed in the court-yard, ready to relieve their comrades' watch above; hastened toward the east tower, from whence the alarm at first could be easily distinguished—They arrived thither, nevertheless, too late, for the party (small as indeed it was) perhaps taking the alarm, or fearful of being surrounded in the forest—(having only one way of flight, the northern side of the Castle being flanked as it was, by the rapid river Savuto) had made a precipitate retreat, and favoured as they were by the thickness of the trees, neither Michael or Riccardo could distinguish the exact circuit they had taken.

This first alarm, only animated Rodolph to redouble his energy and vigilance; for he seemed to have no doubt, but that the horsemen were merely a skirmishing party, to reconnoitre the present strength of the Castle.

This maiden apprehension being past, the Count attended by Drosi, went to the opposite gallery—(being the state apartments of the ancient Princes of Rinaldo) to select a proper suite against the arrival of the Ladies Isabella and Lauria. As they were surveying them separately over with some degree of attention, a sudden gust of wind rushed in from the north window, and blew across a crimson hanging on the side wainscot of the chamber, which discovered to their view the pictures of Ri-

naldo and Santa Maria, large as life ; and in the same style, effect, and design, as they were formerly sketched by Manfredi, in miniature, on the first and last rapturous meeting with each other in Naples.

After a long and most serious pause of reflection on the part of Rodolph, he caught Drossi by the arm, and with great agony of mind exclaimed—"Am I then always doomed to be thus unhappy and molested.—Always to be the standing target for those dark intriguers to shoot their venom and their malice at?—Miserable Rodolph!"—And here his stubborn nature, forgetful of its late determined energy and resolution—yielded to a woman's softness—and Rodolph—the bold Rodolph wept!! ——"But hold (exclaimed the Count, awed and emboldened by perceiving Drossi turn suddenly aside, which he wrongly attributed to the sight of seeing him let fall an unmanly tear—though in fact it was only to conceal a manly one, he had dropped himself)—"Hold, I prithee, Drossi (continued Rodolph)—say, is not this impossible? Some superior mortal must have touched those almost living pictures—for living they appear to be, having life nearly in all their limbs, looks, and gestures.—Oh! my child (looking stedfastly on Santa-Maria—the rough soldier lost, momentarily lost, in the feelings and susceptibilities of the father) oh! my daughter, thou hast been the cause of all these thy parent's woes—thou alone

diseased my mind, unorganized my very soul, and made me the most unhappy of those who might have been the happiest. And now, Drosi, mark me, Recollection comes strong across my disordered mind—For I dreamt me last night—nay, I charge thee do not mock me with the stern rebuke of that thy faithful countenance—Yes, I dreamt last night, that the late Signior Manfredi came to my couch side, and taking me by the self-same hand I now grasp thy honest, steady arm with—he moistened it with his tears—he said, withal, he pitied me.”

“Pitied thee! my Lord (exclaimed Drosi, somewhat roughly; anxious to suppress these rising and unaccustomed emotions of agony and distress; excited, as he conceived, from the past remembrances of a once beloved daughter)—Pitied thee! for what I pray?”—And here, let the reader still suppose, as he may have supposed all along, that Rodolph was, is, and yet may be, a villain.—But trace the the villains through the whole historic scene, and show me scarcely one, but, soon or late, betray the feverish compunctions of remorse; or feel, at times, the milk of human commiseration start occasionally in their savage hearts; for wounds they have given to faultless, unprotected innocence.

“No matter (continued the Count) he said he pitied me—much pitied me, Drosi.”

Drosi attempted to withdraw his arm—

“Bade me be of comfort, for in the end all might yet be well. Dreams, however (continued Rodolph, recovering in some little measure from this unmanly raving) dreams are to me as idle fancies—nor should I, boyish—Carlo like, have mentioned this, but that it brings Manfredi to my mind; for—methinks—Manfredi, and only Manfredi could have executed such able pieces of right noble workmanship—Bernardine or Goddard it could never be.”

“Think no farther of them, my Lord—Let it be my duty to see them removed hence, before my Lady the Countess arrives”—

“Look, then, that it be quickly done—but then the statue, Dross—the execution of that required time, great labour, and infinite genius.”

“Beshrew me, my good Lord, but that, indeed, is not easy to be accounted for—without, indeed, that Signior Manfredi had carved a little marble Duke—a little marble horse—a little marble pedestal, &c.—and sown them in the court-yard, from whence, in due course of time, they have shot up like a vine, to the height and size they now are—Carlo could demonstrate a thousand such possible things.—In fact, his mother (they report) once received a hundred pieces of good sterling gold, from the order of the Carthusian friars, for raising them (as they do also add—and that upon priestly authority withal)—fifty convents,

after something of the self-same manner, out of a small marble quarry, only fourteen feet by ten.”—

“ I thought, (said Rodolph sternly) that I forbad you to talk of such idle fancies.”

“ And I humbly thought, my Lord (answered Drosi, seriously) that you had determined to mock all the idle fantasies which this castle has already created, and may still create—that you had resolved to scoff them in whatever dark and ambiguous shape they might hereafter appear in.—Pardon me, my Lord, (continued Drosi, perceiving that this retort was felt too severely)—pardon me for this boldness—but you, my Lord, gave me my cue, and I, like a gross, blunt actor, have, perhaps, followed up your speech somewhat too uncouthly.”

This retort, nevertheless, made Rodolph once more himself again. Their present care was to secrete the pictures that had unexpectedly given rise to such distressing and unpleasant reflections.

The Countess Isabella was expected, and watched for, the whole of that night, but from some unforeseen delay, did not arrive.

Then now let us quit, for a short while, the embattled towers of Martorano Castle—the warlike and steady resolution of its brave, though little garrison, with the undiscovered mysteries it internally, and, as yet, secretly contains; for—the humble

cottage of Launcelot and Mopsa, where the poor wandering minstrel had accepted a temporary refuge and protection.

CHAPTER XV.

————— Patience and sorrow strove
Which should express her goodliest; you have seen
Sunshine and rain at once—her smiles and tears
Were like a wetter *May*. Those happiest smiles,
That play'd upon her *ripe* lip, seem'd not to know
What guests were in her eyes, which parted thence
As pearls from diamonds dropt. SHAKSPEARE.

LAUNCELOT's little cot (our last place of the forlorn Valentine's abode) was sweetly situated on a small eminence, that commanded a delightful prospect of the surrounding country.—The sojourn of the stranger, and his small party there, on the morn of their departure from the monk's recess, was but of short duration, for they only accepted a little refreshment, and, mounting their horses, took a narrow path that descended into the eastward glen.

Valentine, however, who had been struck by some intuitive motive or another, at those words of Sebastian—"Meet me, on the first evening in the month of April, at Messina's Port"—conquered, for a while, both his sleepiness and fatigue; and watched the departure of the stranger, whom, with his eye, he also pursued into the body of the glen, but soon after lost him in turning through a narrow defile that directed to the left.

Valentine was not suffered to yield much farther to reflection, for, laying himself down upon his pallet, he sacrificed some hours to the god of sleep, not quitting his balmy embrace till the sun had nearly set in the West.

“ Our minstrel having arose, much refreshed, he descended to the lower apartment, where he was first saluted with the sight of his hawk and his lute, from both of which he promised himself more entertainment than hitherto, as his mind already began to feel itself unburthened of those fears, and that gloominess which preyed upon it in the monk’s dreary recess.—His heart also began to experience that lightness, occasionally felt by us all, which inclines you to forbode some approaching favour of good fortune near at hand.—Valentine next saw his polagyrice, placed upon a neat table, carved from the body of a vine, which he eat with all the appetite of a young sturdy goatherd. Then having joined Launcelot and Mopsa, who were sitting contented on a seat that jutted from the outward wall of the cottage, and, after wishing them a good evening, he placed himself on the side of the former, and listened with much attention and satisfaction to the finishing part of the story which Launcelot was telling to Mopsa—respecting the late circumstances that partly came under his knowledge at the monk’s recess,

and which he related with a peculiarity, and dryness of humour, not forgetting to make some reflections on his own fears, on that occasion, as rendered those past events, but so lately, to him, horrible and gloomy, now ridiculous and actual incitations to laughter. Such, indeed, is the changeable temper of the human mind; making jests of those fears, which, scarce a moment before, cost us so many pangs—Like waking pleasures succeeding the agonizing illusions of a recent dream.

Valentine, from the past subject, here took an opportunity of questioning Launcelot, how long he had been absent from his cottage, and what brought him, in company with the stranger, to the monk's recess? enquiring, at the same time, the latter's name, rank, and fortune?

“ It is not many days ago (replied Launcelot) since I left my Mopsa here, to go to Naples to procure a grant for some few acres of land that adjoin my cottage, to increase my vintage. The second day, however, after my arrival there, I by chance fell in with my foster-son Sebastian, at the corner of the Strada de Folido. I did not immediately recollect him, though he instantly recognized me. After the first effusions of our joy were over, and seeing me anxious to enquire how he had fared, and with whom he had shared his past fortunes, he took me to his hotel; and seeing me anxious to repeat my late questions—

the fly boy very briefly desired me to hold my tongue for the future on those subjects, as they were more than he ever dared to answer. So—stripling, (concluded Launcelot) you know as much about the matter as myself, save that I accompanied the stranger from Naples to where we first fell in with you.”

This unsatisfactory reply damped on a sudden the rising comforts that had been kindling in Valentine's breast. He fain would now have gone to his pallet to give a fresh and full run to his former gloomy reflections, but both Launcelot and Mopsa insisting that he should play a little to them on his lute; he took it up, *mingling the sweet smile, with the stolen tear*, and sung in delicious unison the achievements of Godfredi, as displayed upon the plains of Palestine; in strains, withal, so sweet, as raised their humble souls to the highest pitch of celestial ecstacy.

After supper, Launcelot was so enchanted with what he had heard, that he ran and opened a small cabinet in one corner of the room (and in which the minstrel could clearly distinguish the two caskets brought from the monk's recess) and produced a brave flagon of lachryma-christi, which Mopsa and her husband loved almost as dearly as did the veteran Drosi.

Valentine having left his host and hostess to finish their wine, he retired to his pallet,

and reflection fastening upon him again, he began to cast a retrospect once more over the mingled and striking adventures that so closely and constantly accosted him through the latter journey of his life.—He then attempted to look forward, and penetrate into the fresh roads he must pass forward in; but here his ideas were confused in a mass of darkness and perplexity, which he thought, however (Hope taking him, for the moment, kindly by her cherishing hand) might suddenly and speedily burst—and—bursting, throw an extensive irradiation over all his senses.

And here again—the mystery of the parchment scroll intuitively struck him, as to contain the arcana of his future fates and fortunes; and I know not (thought Valentine) from what secret impulse I have it; but there must be something in this mystery which attaches itself most strongly and marvellously to my future destiny—also to my future happiness or misery—I have the keys of both the caskets in my possession—why, therefore, not try to take the advantage of these cottagers' absence, as they pursue their morning labours, and indulge the impulses of my soul? Shall I?—no—says honour:—my fate—my happiness—cry—yes!!!—At this last reasoning thought, a warm glow ran through his whole frame, and which seemed to raise him up, as though an angel gave its assisting hand. Or, like hope elevating the

dying Christian, whose last moments are fixed on heaven. But then—hold!—how shall I answer this to the noble stranger?—Oh! how may I——Here sleep stopped the doubtful reflections of Valentine, and, favouring his beauteous votary, compensated for the mixed occurrences of the day, by the illusive transports of the most flattering dreams; strengthening him, however, illusive or not, as they might hereafter prove, in a resolution to inspect the matter of the mysterious scroll.

CHAPTER XV.

————— Since I was man,
Such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid thunder,
Such groans of roaring wind and rain, I never
Remember to have heard. SHAKESPEARE.

IN the morning, therefore, when Valentine met Launcelot and Mopsa to breakfast, he cheerly observed, that he should wish to treat them with a sight of the great wealth that he possessed in one of those caskets. At hearing this, Mopsa was *dancingly alive*, and urged Launcelot to open quick the cupboard door, and bring it forth, who wanted no incentive on occasions of this kind; for though poor him self he loved to contemplate the wealth of others, which in fact could only have given him more pain than pleasure, envying, as he must, the very bauble which he could not himself possess.

The cupboard door being unlocked, and the casket being placed upon the table, Valentine opened the same, and displayed the full treasure to the cottager's astonished views. Perceiving their wishful eyes stretched to their utmost limits, with the power of gazing, he generously took this opportunity of observing to Launcelot, that if he recollected right, he said something of a grant, which he went to Naples for, to procure some few more acres of land, to increase his vintage.—“ I did boy (replied the Cottager, turning his looks from the casket to the ceiling, and then alternately from the ceiling to the casket)—I did—I did.”—“ Then (said Valentine) count out a hundred crowns, and keep them, to fulfil thy industrious wishes.” “ What—what? (exclaimed Launcelot) oh! the holy porringer! what's this I hear?—count me out a hundred crowns! Do you jest, boy, or art in earnest?”—In earnest, truly, Launcelot—all this wealth is mine own. Why art thou so surprized to find me part with one little lot of crowns, when age and industry have need and appropriation for the same? Come count them forth; and when this thy pleasurable labour is done, thy old faithful Mopsa shall do the same—Come, my kind aged hostess—do not thou be surprised also.—Oh, shame! do not weep, the sight of thy venerable tears will scald mine own cheeks. Come cheerily—they may partly be a legacy for thy

foster-son, Sebastian; that is, if your own lives do not outstretch their expenditure."

Launcelot and Mopfa having counted forth a hundred crowns each, and deposited them in two leathern bags, Valentine proposed that they should then pursue their respective employs and recreations. On this, he took his hawk upon his fist, and sallied out to a little distance, but soon took an opportunity of hastening backwards to the cottage.

As for poor old Launcelot, never did he trip so lightly over the velvet green before;—never either did he prepare to clip his vines more cheerily—no, nor never till now, did Mopfa warble out so sweetly the songs of past times, as she prepared to kneel down and milk her snowy-coated goats.

But, alas! how fearfully wouldst thou, honest Launcelot, have tripped o'er the velvet green—how despairingly wouldst thou have prepared to nip thy tendervines—and thou, Mopfa, thou too, instead of warbling out so sweetly the songs of past times, wouldst have sung the song of black despair—wouldst have hung despondently around the woolly necks of thy snowy-coated goats—hadst thou either been capable of foreseeing the concussive revolution of one poor, short, solitary moment; for—on the very instant that Valentine was preparing to unlock the fatal casket, which contained the mysterious scroll, the heavens and earth, as though seemingly re-

solved to preserve this great and momentous secret in the womb of partial darkness, for some remoter and convenient period—opened their immense bodies, and emitted such extensive and dreadful flashes of sulphur and lightning, as struck the trembling minstrel motionless with fear and horror. To them the equally dreadful peals of thunder, succeeded, crush after crush, as though the elements would have burst. The earth, moved by the same convulsive agonies, shook fearfully beneath, and every awful attendant circumstance, denoted a speedy annihilation.

Valentine, during this dreadful shock, supported himself as well as his tender nature would admit, against the wall of the cottage, and had nigh sunk beneath the bulk of his apprehensions, when Launcelot and Mopsa came running breathless in, overwhelmed with equal terrors. The sight of them, in some measure, revived the minstrel; for society, even in the extremities of danger, is cheering and supporting. All utterance, however, was lost; and, save when, ever and anon, they elevated their hands and eyes to the angry heavens, motion appeared gone also; and thus—it was, in this awful state of suspense and dread, they continued for an hour or more, till the warring elements, wearied with the greatness of their struggle, and the fierceness of their conflict, sunk gradually into rest. On this, they ventured to approach

close to each other, and then, falling devoutly on their knees, they poured forth their thanksgivings to the ministers above, for their peculiar safety and preservation.

Ejaculations, however, on this occasion, the most fervently offered up, perhaps, were those of Valentine, though not less sincere than those of the poor cottagers—for when the distraction of the moment had ceased, and reflection came swelling upon his nicer imagination, the idea of what he had been about to do, when the convulsive storm of nature first broke forth, made him appear little and contemptible in his own eyes—had he fallen one of the victims, among the thousands that fell on this melancholy day, he had fallen in the momentary attempt of a violation and breach of trust and confidence—an act, to the susceptible and honourable mind, the most ungracious and insupportable—for, trifling as Valentine's meditated purpose then was, still the immediate sense of danger, or conviction, magnifies the smallest things, even to immensities—make mole-hills—mountains. The horrors, however, of that day, Valentine was not weak enough to suppose, could be attributed to the straying of one poor particular sheep, among the universal flock; but still it showed him, among the whole general example, how cautious we should be of yielding to the slightest indiscretion, when we may be so

suddenly involved in the unforeseen and general ruin.

When Valentine, therefore, had regained his composure and serenity, from the late shock, and rendered himself in mind, steady, by reflection, he was resolved to submit himself, for the future, rather to the slow, though certain decrees of Heaven, than yield to the flitting fancies of an idle dream, or the impulses of a dishonourable curiosity—The noble stranger had promised him, on his honour, in the Monk's recess, that he should become acquainted with the secret of the mysterious parchment, in seven days from thence, and, as a pledge of his own intended faith, had entrusted both the casket and its key to the minstrel's trust and confidence—holding bright honour, as he did, so pure and illumined in his own breast, as to fix it equally sacred and uncontaminated in the bosoms of others—Oh! shame! shame (thought Valentine within himself, as these ideas recurred to his imagination)—How couldst thou suffer that momentary curiosity to possess thee, which thou hast so often restrained and overpowered in others?

But, to proceed—

Cruel, however, was the spectacle that presented itself to Launcelot, when he ventured to look from his cottage door. His little vineyard was destroyed—the trees were torn from their roots—the herds lay breathless on the parched-up fields,

and every thing around afforded a melancholy presage of ruin and famine—still—even now, as the poor grateful cottager surveyed the general destruction, he had reason and religion (humble as he was) to tell him, that Providence seldom showers down misfortunes upon us, without following them closely up with some concomitant good.—“ The divine power had been pleased (he said) to bare his blooming vintage, and sweep away his skipping herds; but then, had he not again, sent him a kind—an unforeseen protector, in the generous minstrel, whose liberality would enable him, by industry and perseverance, to renovate what had been so unexpectedly cut off from the face of day and nature—?”

CHAPTER XVI.

Either there is a civil strife in heaven,
Or else the world, too saucy with the gods,
Incenses them to send destruction.
Now does my project gather to a head;
My charms crack no., my sprites obey, and
Time goes upright with his carriage.

SHAKSPEARE.

AT the moment the dreadful concussion of the elements prevented Valentine from examining the mysterious scroll, Rodolph and his now inseparable companion Drossi, were walking to and fro upon the ramparts, watching the approach of the Countess Isabella and her suit. The stout

walls of the proud Castle, for the first time, seemed to tremble beneath this hideous shock of nature. If they shook, however, those who had most reason to feel and dread it, did not even flinch.—They saw, nevertheless, the dangers that hung over their present situation; and retreated from them with the same calmness and steadiness, as though they were retiring from some superior, irresistible danger in the hour of battle.

It may be a matter of surprise, that one who could start, prance, and tremble, at a statue of marble—the sound of a sacring-bell, or at a few wordy conceits from an invisible agent—would not have shook, “*marrow, bones, and all,*” at the tremendous sight of this elementary conflict—or, that it did not fill him with a momentary awe, inspired him (even though, perhaps, for the first time as it might have been) with the most sacred sense of the divine attributes—led him into the most pious confessions, of the immensity of God’s great and irresistible powers?—No, to thoughts like his, imaginary and superficial terrors often rise superior to real and substantial ones.

The mind, indeed, is prepared to meet the one, whilst the other comes like a frightful stranger. Storms and earthquakes were the familiar enemies of his country. Whenever they appeared, even in their most frightful forms, they were naturally

to be expected, and of course in the best manner to be guarded against ; but when an invisible (we will suppose in this instance) a supernatural phænomena rises against you, we are perplexed, tortured, fretted, and weakened in a superior degree.

Whilst the Count and his companion were walking silently and slowly up and down the great hall, no ways intent upon the crashes that were bursting over their heads, and the broad flashes of lightning that were ever and anon darted across them, they were suddenly thunderstruck—with a most tremendous noise, that appeared to have issued from the arched door which led into the cloisters. The crush shook the whole hall, and reverberated over every part of the Castle.—They both drew forth their hardy steels, and flew undaunted towards the spot from whence they supposed the noise to have proceeded. Onwards they hastened without discovering the least symptoms of their alarm, till they reached the cymetry, where the cause was as instantly perceived as soon as they had entered.—The great bell had fallen from the dome, and occasioned the hideous crash, and such also was the weight with which it fell, as to force apart some of the monuments nearest the centre of this gloomy and awful charnel-house.—Here, and especially at this dreadful moment, when the thunder rolled impetuously from

above.—When the vivid lightning threw its broad expansive flashes every where around; the mind, at least the religious and the feeling mind, must have been struck with uncommon awe and terror.—The forked streaks darting through the gloomy avenues of the cloisters, and from thence penetrating into the still gloomier recess of the dead, exhibited the bare, unfleshed, uncarcassed remains of those, who had been for years deposited in these despoiled and shattered monuments. To minds indeed, more capable of sensibility and reflection, than fell to the lot of these rough, unpolished soldiers, it would have appeared, as though the last day had come, and that these graves were now opened, ready to yield up their mortal tenants.

Another flash of lightning, fiercer than any of the former, now darting into the cymetery, and Rodolph standing then beneath the dome, he could plainly discover large iron-bars above, something in the shape of a portecullis, and light also to an amazing height, which he conjectured must descend from the mouth of the north tower.—

“ And now Drossi (said he, after a few moments recollection) I think we can make some good account of that same bell sounding, which was supposed to proceed from the north tower, and which afforded such alarms over the whole castle. For the sound ascending, and then emptying itself into the air, gave a probable cause for this con-

jecture. This secret, at least, therefore, is now accounted for;—but (continued Rodolph) where is the sacristan all this time? —Would we could discover him likewise! —By St. Januarius, if we could, we would pay him bravely for his chimings.”

“Anon, no doubt we shall, my Lord (replied Drofi) if the devil, his protector, has not taken him off in this tremendous storm.”

They now quitted the cymetry, and returning to the hall, drowned the thoughts of the dreadful storm that howled around the Castle, in forming plans for best defending it, against all the efforts of human attacks, though it was then so strongly opposed by the attacks of a super-human power.

When all nature was once more hushed into rest, weary with its past convulsive struggles, the Count and Drofi went to see what effects the storm had produced upon the inmates of the outer court-yard. They had not occasion, however, to proceed quite so far, for they found them all in the armoury, regaling themselves, over two haunches of a fine fat deer, and some choice flagons of wine, with the view (as Andruccio observed to the latter) of keeping up their spirits against the terrors of the storm.

From this, their undaunted tempers in the hour of such superior danger, Rodolph

drew a more substantial picture than ever of his men's courage, resolution, and constancy. The storm, however, being over, he ordered them to their different posts and then retired with Drossi to his own apartment; where he shortly followed the example that had been just set before him in the armoury.

About the third hour, however, before midnight, they were called off from the old lachryma-christi, by Andruccio, who informed them, that Carlo's escort was seen off the ramparts, with the Countess and two other females, riding in full gallop toward the Castle. Rodolph was somewhat surprised at this sudden intelligence, not in the least expecting their arrival that night, and so soon after the furious tempests of the day; but as he strongly confided in Carlo's discretion and valour, he gave credit for its propriety, and having ordered Andruccio to haste to the great gate, with a party of his comrades; himself and Drossi also hastened to the platform, where finding the information was all good, he gave orders that the gate should be instantly opened, when he made the signal from above, and at the same time for them to form a semi-circle around the entrance. All this being executed with the utmost caution and circumspection, he then descended himself into the court-yard to meet and welcome his lady-wife, with the beautiful Lauria, to the Castle.

Various were the sensations that attached themselves to the fair visitors, as they entered this strong and stupendous fortress. Isabella and Lauria had of late opened their whole souls to each other, and made their minds and fancies one and inseparable. The former, unable any longer to view the rapid decay that was seizing on the tender constitution of the latter, had convinced her that the minstrel, Florizel, was no other than her poor fugitive daughter in disguise; and that too from such an incontrovertible chain of proofs, that left not a doubt of it either in her's or the Chevalier's opinion. Satisfied, therefore, with the knowledge of her Florizel's sex, the violence of Lauria's passions ceased, affection only remained—the pure affection of a sister—A perfect peace of mind succeeded, and rosy health once more bloomed with summer vigour o'er her beautiful countenance. On the other hand, Lauria had related, and, if possible, exaggerated, the dreadful adventures (which she had at first neglected to communicate, from the deep sorrow she experienced for the loss of Florizel) which she had met with in the Castle some years back. And, in fact, it was with some difficulty she had been persuaded by her uncle (notwithstanding the filial affection she felt for Isabella, and the dangers that the Castella stood exposed to on the side of the river Crati, from the at-

tacks of the Corsairs) to return again to the place of her former fears. As for Sylvia, she trembled only on report, like the vine leaf in autumn, when shook by the rude north-east wind, as she rode beneath the broad arch of the great gate-way, and her spirits were only supported by the helping recollection that she was going to abide under the same roof with her constant and beloved Carlo.

The wearied females were so fatigued with the expedition of their journey; so harraressed also with the alarms they had so recently experienced, and the ideal dangers likewise that might have accosted them on their way, that they had scarce power to dismount from their horses.—Assisted, however, by Rodolph and Drossi, they once more found themselves on safe ground.—The apartments prepared for them (as observed before) were on the west gallery—the same side—which had been for some reason, avoided till this time by the Count—Thither, therefore, he prepared to conduct them.

Lauria (as formerly remarked also) possessed a nice discrimination, added to a strong tincture of superstition. When she passed, therefore, through the great courtyard, she was suddenly struck (wearied and depressed as she was in mind and body) at the novel sight of the marble equestrian statue. She collected and re-collected her thoughts, rapid as the wind, but

could not for her soul, call it to her imagination, when she had been at the castle before. This seemed more strange, as she well knew the place had been but so lately inhabited. Rodolph's scrutinizing eye, however, in a moment, caught her's, and with it her thoughts—he, therefore, hastened on, toward the west gallery, though not without Lauria's having satisfied her curiosity with a full retrospection of the chapel, where she was happy to find no tapers were burning, as formerly.

The Count and Drossi having escorted their new guests to the grandest chamber on that side of the castle, he proposed leaving them alone for a while, whilst he went to prepare all necessary and fit accommodations and refreshments for the first night—But! how great was both the surprise and astonishment of him and his trusty confidant, when they turned round and discovered a full and superb assortment of the most beautiful female garments they ever beheld, heaped unsparingly upon a settee at the farther end of the chamber. Isabella, Lauria, and Sylvia perceived them, with equal swiftness, and Rodolph alternately received compliments from them all on this occasion. The one praising him for his conjugal attention, the second for his exquisite taste, and the third for his great judgment of choice.—“As for my part (said Sylvia, turning the habits very

curiously over) I cannot perceive one but what is too costly and magnificent for me."

The Count, however, paid no attention to the compliments now paid him so liberally, but withal so unmeritedly. His eye was fixed alternately on the settee and then upon Drossi; but perceiving at length that Signiora Lauria began to make acute observation of his sudden silence, his fixed reflective attitude, and ready also to question the motives of his present apparent surprise—he took likewise his almost as sudden departure; previously observing, however, that he would depart and give orders himself, for the preparation of their supper, whilst they could refresh themselves with changes of apparel.

When Rodolph was sufficiently distant from hearing and observation, he joined Drossi, in thousands of conjectures, relative to this last and fresh mystery.—“ Beshrew me, my Lord (exclaimed the latter, in the end) but there must be some secret pannel or concealed trabochetto, on this, and, I firmly believe, on this side only, of the castle; and, by St. Mark, we must, by some means or another, set about, steadily and resolutely, to find them out. To accomplish this purpose, therefore, secretly and securely, I would recommend that my good Lady, the Countess, with Signiora Lauria, should take occupation of our side, lest these hidden, and most audacious villains (whoever, or whatever they may be)

should attempt to work upon their womanish fears, and thereby create any unnecessary alarm over the whole fortress.—We hitherto have met with nothing particularly interruptive or mysterious in the opposite gallery; besides, I well know, that both Signiora Lauria and Sylvia, are as credulous as Carlo.—Francolisse, at Bellito, told me a good round story of the marvellous strange things that they had heard and seen, when they formerly tenanted the Castle; tacked with a long string of superstitious opinions and arguments, broached upon that occasion, by his young and beautiful mistress. With submission, therefore, my Lord, I would rather dissect the entire west side of the fortress, to the very body of the outward wall, but I would discover this last and most insolent endeavour to play upon your fancy and your passions. For it is evident, that there must be more secret pannels or trabochettos, from the first trick of rekindling the tapers, to this last audacious piece of buffoonry, in surprizing us with those costly robes, than that which I formerly discovered, under the guidance and influence of my old friend lachryma-christi; and I really think, that these secret channels, must incontrovertibly lay on this side of the castle;—particularly so, as here were the apartments in which the ancient princes of Rinaldo chiefly resided; and these mysterious clues were in every probability, invented and

formed by them, as leading to ultimate places of security, when attacked and overpowered by the neighbouring chieftains."

The Count listened to Drofi's observations with unusual attention, divided with some degree of astonishment. The hardy foldier delivered his sentiments with a share of gravity that had scarcely ever been till now the companion of his nature.—To the former rough, unpolished temper of the man of war, he seemed now to aim at the subtlety of the man of state—As his arguments, therefore, arrived so unexpectedly, they fastened themselves still the stronger on Rodolph's mind;—for, from great authorities we generally are led to inspect more than much, but from weaker hands, when they, in the least degree, excite surprise—that surprise swiftly increases to astonishment—such, therefore, had the weight of Drofi's blunt and unconsidered sentiments on the judgment of his Lord, that he was determined to adopt them in their fullest extent.

As they were proceeding, however, towards the armoury, pursuing this their conversation, the Count suddenly halted, and reclining on Drofi's shoulder, significantly observed—"But how, my fellow, could the sudden arrival of Isabella and Lauria come to be known to these invisible mortals, that such superb garments should be provided for them so appropriately—so timely—and so openly audacious withal,

for their immediate reception at the Castle ?”

“ Why, my good Lord (replied the other) that may, in a great measure, be ascertained; for, if they (if they, they are) can creep out, like rats, from their holes, with such a quantity of attire saddled upon their backs, they could consequently overhear our discourse, when we went to overlook the range of apartments, against my Lady the Countess’s reception.”—

“ Good!—excellently good (observed the Count, clapping his hand to his forehead)—and, now, beshrew me, Drossi, but my senses have been so blunted with the keen edge of trouble and disappointment, that they are dead to every quickness of apprehension.”

“ As for the garments themselves (continued Drossi, much flattered with the first part of Rodolph’s observation) they may still more easily be accounted for; and the cause of their so suddenly re-appearing as they have done, may, also, be as easily attached to it.—The general sacking that took place in the fortress, previous to your Lordship’s first arrival hither, answers for the original disappearance of this costly attire; and this their sudden re-appearance can answer no other design than to throw the gauntlet of defiance even to our very teeth; and, at the same time, to signify boldly unto us, that they stand secure against our most active powers, and impreg-

nable to all our meditated discoveries.”—
 “Then let them look well, my right good fellow (exclaimed the Count, in a fierce and animated tone) to this their boasted security.—But come, we will speak farther of this same business to-morrow.—To-morrow!—Aye, *to-morrow*, we will begin our work—Therefore I shall transfer the provisioning of our supper for the present, Drosi, to you, and so now return, till bed time, to the Countess’ and the fair Lauria’s society.—In the mean while, let all my brave followers regale themselves in the great hall, on account of my Lady-wife’s safe arrival at our castle—half relieving the other moiety of their comrades, during their hourly watches on the ramparts.—Do you and Carlo attend us at supper.—In the morning early (concluded Rodolph) let your nephew attend me in my chamber, as I shall require some special converse with him, relative to his journey to Bellito——.”

CHAPTER XVII.

By mine art

I have from their confines call’d ’em to enact

My present fancies.

SHAKESPEARE.

AT sun-rise, Carlo, agreeable to his commands, knocked at the door of Rodolph’s apartment; and being straightway admitted, he scarcely gave the Count time to make a single interrogatory (his uncle having anti-

icipated the whole of them the night before) before he proceeded, as thus:

“ Agreeable to your directions, my Lord (said Carlo), I took the road on that side St. Biagio, as you mentioned, and Heaven be praised that we got to Bellito in the critical period we did: for we came up just in time to assist the good Chevalier in repelling a party of banditti or rebels, who were attacking his Castella with all their might and main. Your kinsman, my Lord, as I afterwards heard, had made a desperate sally from the front gate upon them, at the head of about ten followers, against whom the villains also made an equally desperate stand.—Myself, however, with my two brave comrades, vigorously assaulted them in the rear; and they being thus taken by surprise, and unconscious, perhaps, of the smallness of our numbers, fled in all directions. The Chevalier, on this, not thinking it prudent to hazard a pursuit, as the villains were ambuscading all about the coast, we all entered the castella, without a single man being either killed or wounded. Your good kinsman, my Lord, offered to make me a handsome pecuniary recompence for my fortunate assistance; but had he been a stranger, your poor servant, Carlo, would have done the same for him, with equal zeal and good will. Besides, my Lord, I was soon repaid, and re-overpayed, by

meeting with my Sylvia, and once more folding her within my arms. For, indeed, I have thought more than twice or thrice, from the strange and unlucky dreams that have come over me in this castle, that something would——Pardon me, my Lord (said Carlo, altering his tone and subject, on perceiving a dark frown clenching itself across the Count's sable brow) Pardon me; but, some how or another, I think that Sylvia is marvellously improved since she has been in this salubrious part of Sicily. Now, do not you really think, my Lord, that Sylvia is superlatively pretty? Francolisse, indeed, says, she is a most charming little angel; and that I may think myself a happy fellow in being the object of her choice and affections. And then again, that rich habit, which your Lordship's goodness and generosity has bestowed upon Sylvia, makes her look so"——

"Cease this subject, boy (exclaimed the Count, half pleased, and half ruffled) and tell me what brought you back to the castle, so soon after the fury and violence of the late tempest?"

"Ah! heaven knows, my Lord (continued Carlo) it was furious and violent enough; and it would be difficult for me to describe the dreadful sensations we all experienced at this terrible and awful warning, for it must certainly forebode some more approaching ills; for I recollect a prophecy that was translated from

my great grandame to my grandame, and from my grandame to me—”

“Curfes for ever light (exclaimed Rodolph, with fo much vehemence that made the other start again) upon your prophecies and your grandames; to the purpofe, firrah, or ——”

“I fhall obey you, my Lord, with all refpect and duty.—Well, thank heaven (continued Carlo again) we all efaped the tempeft, and as the greateft calm, as I have heard, generally fucceeds the greateft ftorm, we feized the opportunity of its happily proving fo. Signioria Lauria, indeed, laid down many found precedents, to eftablifh this principle; for the fudden ringing of bells, as ſhe very wifely obferved on this occafion, were fure to—”

“St. Dominick feize all your ringing of bells (once more exclaimed the Count, fcarcely able, at hearing this, to keep his features in their ordinary traces) but fay—any thing particularly farther from my kinfman?”

“Nothing more than his furtherance of mutual efteem and friendship to your Lordſhip, with kind recommendations of the learned Signiora Lauria to your good will and protection.”

“Well, Carlo (concluded Rodolph) I have much to fay in commendation of your courage, prudence, and difinterefted conduct; and, in recompence therefore, I now

appoint you the ceremonial and confidential attendant of my lady-wife and Signiora Lauria—affording you, by this trust, the full opportunity of profiting by the learned discourses of the latter, and being continually in the society of your charming little Sylvia. The ramparts will present them with the most delightful prospects; and whilst the eye is indulged, the body also will be recreated by exercise, and the purity of the air. But mark me, boy; your privilege of attendance must extend no farther. Therefore, haste to the opposite gallery; and in the first antichamber await their morning summons.”

On this, Carlo shot by his uncle, who was attending at the door of his own apartment, for the Count's call, with a step, light as feathered Mercury, and with a heart, if possible still lighter—Rodolph then joined Drossi, with whom he occupied himself about the Castle, till dinner hour, when they joined the Countess and Lauria in the great hall, which was to be appropriated in future for the place of general and convivial association. Dinner over, the Count conducted the Ladies Isabella and Lauria to his own side of the castle, to sip their beverage (as he pretended) but, in fact, to domesticate them there for the future; giving orders for that purpose, as he went along, to their page Carlo, to see that every thing necessary for their use and accommodation, should be immediately

removed from the west to the east gallery. "That part of the castle affording (as he added) the most beautiful prospects, and being less pregnable withal to the damps arising from the bosom of the river Savuto"

This business being effected, without the least idea of suspicion on the part of Lady Isabella or Lauria, the Count and Drossi soon after left them, to begin their first watch on the other side of the castle.

The first thing determined upon between them was, that they should retain a cautious and mutual silence. When they, therefore, entered the apartment where the female attire had been so secretly deposited, they placed their trenchant swords and daggers on a table, seating themselves opposite to each other, with their elbows fixed thereon, and supporting the sides of their heads with the broad palms of their hands, in anxious expectation that they might be speedily summoned to call their good weapons to some effectual use. In this situation they continued for some hours, till at length, they *conceived* that they could distinguish the sounds of approaching footsteps, as proceeding from behind the back wainscoting. Their attention, from discovering this, was raised to the utmost pitch. They, nevertheless, continued immovable on their seats, saving their intuitively gripping the hilts of their swords and daggers. The footsteps (scarcely

as they sounded at first) now became more distinct and distinct, till, at length, it appeared to both as though they had suddenly halted.

The Count, on this, made a motion for Drosi to rise, and then they slowly crept towards the wainscot, against which they placed their eager ears, shooting at each other alternate glances of the most savage exultation. They now listened for revenge and death, whilst revenge and death were perhaps nearer to them than they could possibly divine.—The sound of voices next attacked their ears, but in so weak a strain, and apparently at such a distance, that they could not trace them to the least degree of intelligibility. Again and again they almost cracked the very organs of hearing, till at last they could distinguish the utterance of the following unconnected sentences:

“Garments—surprise—unequal punishment—meditated villainy—pity—Countess—no farther alarms—dispatches—Prince Rinaldo—speedy re—first evening in the month of April—Santa-Maria—four years past—villain—embrace—die in peace—to prayers—God be with us—fredi—to-morrow—’tis well. On this the sound of the footsteps seemed to return backward, toward the same way from whence it also appeared they must have advanced.

Here Drosi became so furious and impatient, that he had already prepared both

hands and feet, to exert their utmost strength against the wainscoting, to force himself through; when the Count, with his sword pointed betwixt his breast and the wall, prevented his purpose, and then made a signal to be followed immediately from thence.—He next shot along the spacious corridor, and then descending rapidly from the gallery into the hall, he proceeded to the ramparts. Thither arrived, he ordered Gabot and Michael, who were upon the centinel, to remove to some distance, and then thus addressed himself to his fiery and maddened follower; and that withal, in the same strain of deliberate meditated revenge, as marked the first traits of his character, in the former part of this narrative.

“ Drossi (said he) had you been suffered to yield to the sudden, though honest, impulse of your heart, our designs, perhaps, might have been frustrated for ever.—The energies of *my* mind have now come into re-action.—This last discovery has re-inspired—has re-inspired me.—It now wants—mark me, a watch and a half of midnight—To-morrow, therefore, we repair again to the same place, and first discover if that particular hour is the appropriate time of rendezvous. Should it prove so, we will straight set about mining that side of the castle, and in case of future unforeseen emergencies, destroy both it and its secret residents at once. Could the

latter be happily accomplished, it would be a master-stroke, indeed; for, it is apparent, that I have been deceived in the impostors.—Though to Bernardine and Goddard, I always attributed the despoliation of my hereditary possessions, still I always discredited this, my fancy, when I turned my thoughts back on the different executions of genius and industry that have presented themselves ever and anon to our view.—The statue—the pictures—oh! and every thing, went to contradict this now too false conjecture.—No—it is now but too evident, as I have at starts imagined, that *Manfredi*, has been the rock of all the wrong constructions my imagination has been shattered on.—You heard, distinct, this late discourse—heard the divided parting sound of—*fredi*.—What could that split word be coupled with, but *Manfredi*.—Oh! the instinct of my soul convinces me, it must be so.—That there is a secret pannel, then, no doubt can possibly remain, but still the same caution, skill, and prudence, which wrought the formation of this as yet undiscovered channel of egress and regrefs, must also have raised an intervening obstacle, which by tempting us too suddenly to pursue, would have likewise involved us in misery—most probably, in death.

Had we attempted and succeeded in bursting open this clandestine trap, some dreadful brink, leading to a vacuity betwixt us and our enemies, might have pre-

cipitated us into inevitable annihilation.—
 Instance strongly confirms this supposition;
 for anciently, in many of our strong south-
 ern fortresses, vacuities have been formed
 from the main body, to the utmost extre-
 mity of its wall; so that in fact the secreted
 person, by the construction of a wooden
 bridge, might pass to the interior of his
 Castle, which when drawn up on the op-
 posite side, as danger or detection might
 make it necessary, rendered him inaccessible
 to his foes.—The interval was a dreadful
 chasm, and destruction the inevitable doom
 of those whose suspicions, or state employ-
 ments, led them to attempt the fatal disco-
 very; and as they fell into the womb of
 death and oblivion, so also fell the secret
 with them.—And, perhaps, a similar snare
 brought on that unconnected conversation,
 that we might the more unthinkingly suf-
 fer a hasty curiosity to overcome a neces-
 sary caution—Those seven sentences (con-
 tinued the Count) following “*garments,*”
 indeed, Drossi, I cannot with any certainty
 comprehend.—But then—what of “*Prince*
Rinaldo’s—speedy re”—turn, must have suc-
 ceeded of course—*First evening*—(too me-
 thinks they said) *in the month of April.*—
 Can Rinaldo too, then be alive?—It is al-
 most plain, Manfredi is—But then, why
 thus separated?—But hold—“*First even-*
ing in the month of April.”—By St. Janua-
 rius, that falls on the morrow! They said
 something also of “*to-morrow.*”—It is

strange—I have long conceived him dead.
 —“*Die in peace*”—Would to heaven, they
 were dead,—in peace, or not—above or
 below.—“*God be with us*”—God grant
 that they *may* be with him.—Nay, I
 thought that I had taken safe and sufficient
 pains, to send them thither.—Thought
 that the daggers of those perfidious villains
 had been reeking, and by this time
 staunched, in their blood;—rustied also,
 with their crimson gore, these some four
 summers past!”——“In whose blood, my
 Lord (exclaimed Drossi, astonished at this
 last sanguinary exclamation;—for he still
 continued ignorant of that scene which
 had been the subject of Rodolph’s bloody
 attempt upon the lives of Rinaldo and Man-
 fredi)—Pardon me, but in whose blood,
 my Lord?”——“Now beshrew me (con-
 tinued Rodolph, perplexed and confused
 at this sudden question; enraged moreover,
 that his passions should so soon overcome
 his caution, and which, in fact, now made
 him forget to draw some inferences, that
 might otherwise have recurred to his me-
 mory, relative to the *pilgrim* in Asia and
 Tuscany; also to the prominent circum-
 stances of the *ring*, and his *daughter’s por-
 trait*; all of which, concentrated in one
 view, might probably have afforded him
 some more matter for the exercise of his
 reflections and conjectures)—Aye, beshrew
 me, Drossi, but my senses, pursuing distrac-
 tion, still lead me on to wander from the

path of reason, into a vortex of incoherences.—But come, we will give a respite for this night to these tormenting fancies;—for

They wound my thoughts, worse than the sword my flesh;

But thought's the slave of life, and life time's fool;
And time, that takes survey of all the world,

Must have a stop. ———

SHAKSPEARE.

On this, Drosi, who was not perfectly satisfied with this last explanation, but who still, however, found a fresh flow of duty and affection increasing for his Lord, as the rough stream of ill-fortune was dashing against him; instantly recommended the Count to have a social recourse for the present evening, to that cherishing relief of all thoughts and cares—honest, old lachrymachristi; and this friendly counsel was no sooner started, than resolved upon. They, therefore, sallied into the hall, where the women were waiting to receive the Count at supper, and where Rodolph might have exclaimed, with Antony—

Some wine, within there, and our viands;—fortune knows,

We scorn her most, when most she offers blows.

CHAPTER XVIII.

—— Ostentimes, to win us to our harm,
The instruments of darkness tell us truths,
Win us with honest trifles, to betray us
In deepest consequence.

SHAKSPEARE.

NOTHING farther occurred in the Castle from that night, till noon the next day,

when the Count discovered from off the ramparts, a numerous body of troops marching about Cosenza, and filing off by different circuits. — Their spears and helmets received fresh effulgence from the beams of the sun, who was now in the full meridian of his journey. Rodolph, on this strange discovery, immediately dispatched Drofi and Gabot, with orders to discover the cause of these warlike advances, but in a manner so secretly withal, as to defeat every surprise and detection. In this interval, he was racked with the utmost anxiety, whilst his chilled soul, whispered to his ill-boding imagination, that some fatal mischief was upon the move against him.

In two hours, Drofi and Gabot returned with the intelligence, that the late tempest had been attended with a violent eruption of Mount Vesuvius, which had nearly reduced all Naples to ruins, and that the principal inhabitants who had escaped the wreck, were all emigrating more southwardly. Duke Reignier, the Viceroy, also, being informed that a second eruption was likely soon to succeed the first, had quitted the capital, for Cosenza; where he proposed for a short time to remove the Neapolitan court. — “It was them therefore (concluded Drofi) whom we distinguished marching in such warlike array, from off the ramparts.”

This information struck like a forked ar-

row in the heart of Rodolph. The court so near him, and that court (at least the creatures of it) his enemies, gave him more substantial apprehension, than could the whole combined forces of the Sicilian army.—Contarini and Montoni were also the leading creatures of this same court. The letters of Foscarini and Montalto now came fresh and hot in his memory; fiercer far, than the blasted inquisitorial flames of the hell-howling Dominick.—“*Many a good Neapolitan’s shoulders (as the former had observed) shall smoke with blood.*”—And by St. Januarius (thought Rodolph, fiercely) many a shoulder SHALL smoke with blood, before they beat me off these tough and hardy walls.—The accusation, however (as reported by the latter) being preferred against him before the secret council of the state, for the *murder of Rinaldo*, with other charges of high crimes and misdemeanors, pulled his very heart-strings, till they made him chafe again, with terror and apprehension.—No time, or opportunity, however, was to be lost for want of consideration; and therefore, ordering Drossi, his best and most faithful counsellor, in all cases of danger, to follow him into his new apartment; he began to reflect what was to be done, in this case of extreme danger and emergency.

The Count had partially communicated the contents of Foscarini and Montalto’s

letters to his companion, and to him alone. The danger, therefore, that now seemed to threaten him brought a question from Drofi, which he did not think proper on a former occasion to put, as he had met with no encouragement so to do—But he now asked (after Rodolph had expressed his fears from the Court's coming to hither Calabria) what charges they could have against him; for high crimes and misdemeanors?

“ That point (replied the Count) does not convey the main charge against me. The principal one, I did not think proper at first to disclose to any one, from motives of delicacy and honour.—No! the grand accusation against me—is the *murder of Rinaldo!*”

“ Indeed! my Lord (rejoined Drofi, with great astonishment) but then on what grounds can they accuse you of so heinous a crime?”

“ Let the charge, Sir (added Rodolph, somewhat sharply) be heinous or no, they have accused me of it.—But still, they cannot support the charge, save on the evidences of Bernardine and Goddard; but they, by accusing me, must consequently and ultimately condemn and criminate themselves.”

“ But who can be the chief accuser, my Lord?”

“ I know of none, whose malice would

stretch so far, except it be Philip Contarini."

"But then, *dare* those villains, good my Lord, blacken your fame, your honour, and your courage, with the foul crime of a secret murder? Can they come forward, thus to perjure themselves, for Count Contarini; a villain only equalled in the villainies of their own?"

"Hold—I can retain no longer the dreadful secret from thee, Drosi, that now swells my agitated breast, and crows the better part of me!—I will be brief and open. Mark me, then:—You recollect when I sent Bernardine and Goddard on a secret errand to the castle, and from that day, as you well know also, I have never beheld them since. You likewise are acquainted with the correlative ideas I have entertained on this mysterious subject.—Know then—that the errand I sent them on was to—*murder Rinaldo and Manfredi.*"

Drosi, on this, started from his seat, and retreated some paces backward; for (as we have already remarked) he was a brave fair soldier against an open broad-day foe; but a bitter enemy to the night-dark assassin.)

—"Nay then (continued Rodolph) if thou wilt be gone—go—leave me—leave me in this the hour of danger and persecution—abandon the castle straight, lest thou should be crumbled in its ruins.—Go

to the court and evidence against me. Oh! fool that I was (rising from his chair, and clasping his forehead with his hands) fool that I was, thus to open the sluices of my soul, and drain its most secret resources in the bosom even of confidential regard itself."

Drofi's nature, though it thus militated against the idea of secret murders and midnight assassinations, could not withstand, however, the agony, remorse, and distress that were so strongly and fiercely depicted in the countenance of his Lord and Captain. Bending, therefore, on his knee, he caught hold of Rodolph's cloak, and swore by the honour of a soldier, that he would stand by his fortunes to the last drop of his blood.—The Count, on this, re-assumed a degree of calmness, that almost made him reconciled even to the ill fortunes that every where surrounded him—For, oh! solacing ever is the voice of fidelity and attachment, even in the last and bitterest agonies of death. He then raised up his steady soldier, and folded him with fervour to his aching breast.

" Oh! Drofi (resumed the Count) the retrospection of Montalto's letter perplexes me more and more—No evidence can impeach and convict me, but that of Bernardine and Goddard; therefore, they could never be the mysterious residents of the Castle. On the other hand, by impeaching me, they must have murdered Rinaldo and Manfredi.—If so, Manfredi also cannot

as I have suggested, be the secret resident. Oh! by St. Januarius, but it is a dark and intricate affair. Perhaps again, Manfredi escaped, and Rinaldo alone fell beneath the assassins strokes; for Montalto's letter says nothing of him in the accusation. Then, this is most probable, though detached from a complete certainty—Oh! Drofi, would that my kinsman were alive, and in possession of this Castle, could I but regain my peace of mind by the dear-bought exchange!”

“ Then know, Lord Rinaldo was not murdered, but lives !!! ”—faintly exclaimed a voice, as issuing from some hollow place, and apparently from the same part the former unconnected sounds had proceeded.

The Count and Drofi, on hearing this, shot up like lightning from their seats, and immediately the former, with a firm undaunted voice exclaimed—“ Oh! unknown mortal, whoever thou art, do not thus conjure up my surprise and fears, by idle and cruel mockeries. If Rinaldo lives, prove thy happy words substantial, by informing me of thy name, and the secret avenue to thy mysterious recess.—And by the immortal powers, I swear——Swear not—Neither of these secrets can I yet disclose—I have on oath, registered myself to preserve them inviolably so.—As for the secret avenue that leads to my mysterious gloomy cell, it would be death inevitable for any one to at-

tempt the discovery of it.—Therefore, at present, be content.—Thy remorse has raised my pity—Rinaldo lives.—Be firm, therefore, and meet thy accusers with confidence and fortitude—no more—farewell.—

“Answer me, but this—knowest thou, if Manfredi lives also?”—

Here a solemn pause ensued, but, all was silent, as the dead of the night. The invisible recluse answered no farther. The Count, however, from the last solemn declaration, did not feel himself greatly disappointed; but nevertheless, to make recompence for this, he found his mind softened and alleviated—and his spirits invigorated and raised by the strengthening assurances he had already heard.

Then, scarce had this last mysterious business ended, when Gabot entered the Count's apartment, and announced the arival of four horsemen, in the Viceroy's uniform, waiting for entrance at the great gate. Rodolph was somewhat startled at this early and sudden summons; but collecting renewed courage from what he had just heard—“*Be firm, and meet thy accusers with confidence and fortitude;*” he hastened to the platform, and finding that they had a dispatch from the Duke Reignier, he ordered the gate to be opened; and the messengers having delivered their credentials, they turned their horses' heads again, and rode off toward Cosenza.

The official letter contained, first, a

formal charge against John Count Rodolph, for the murder of Prince Rinaldo; and secondly, for the unlawful possession he maintained of his castle and domains. His accuser was also formally announced to be Philip Count Contarini. This notice was followed up with a special summons that he should appear on the ninth hour of the following day, at the Castle of Cosenza, before the grand Council there to be assembled, under the pains and penalties of perpetual banishment, and confiscation of all his properties.

The Count having perused this summons, he then delivered it over to Drofi for the same purpose, his heart burning with indignation, and his thoughts teeming with his own, and wishes for God's curses against that fell enemy of his peace and honour—the foul fiend Contarini.

Another note was contained in the dispatch, which ran briefly as thus:

“ Noble Rodolph,

“ You have been a valiant captain, and

“ a firm friend to both the Sicilies and

“ the King my master. Your ene-

“ mies are very numerous here.

“ They seek your life and fortunes--

“ beware of them ere it is too late.

“ Cosenza.

REIGNIER.”

Oh! Generous Duke (exclaimed the Count) how much do I thank you for this friendly, but fruitless warning—alas—*thou* art all goodness—*thou* art too mild to

combat with these wolfish courtiers, clad in the lambkin's coating! Thou art but the shadow, not the representative of royalty; but a mere state-wheel that every man among them can turn about. Didst thou but wield the iron sceptre rustied over, and clotted thick with blood, then wouldst thou be feared and revered. But the innocent nature of thy temper, leading thee ever on to acts of gentleness and mercy, renders thee but a bauble for them to play and toss about withal.—Oh! Drosi (continued Rodolph, showing him the Duke's letter) see—our noble Viceroy here, has warned me of my danger, and has transmitted me clear intimation and opportunity of escaping therefrom—But no! by St. Januarius, I will not flinch a single step.—Boldly and resolutely, I'll stand the brunt, face to face, I will meet them, hand to hand, I'll fight them; methinks, so great is the desire of my revenge, that, cannibal-like, I could eat the very flesh of Contarini, and after with my teeth scrape his very bones!—But come to-morrow—at the eight hour Drosi (concluded the Count) we must be prepared and nobly equipped, suit able to the greatness of my rank. Gabot, Michael, and Pietro shall accompany us to Cosenza. Let it be so ordered, and also reported over the Castle, that I go to welcome the Viceroy on his arrival at the capital of hither Calabria. That done, meet me straight in the hall to supper,

whither I will now go and make the same rumour to my Lady-wife, and the fair Lauria—" *But come to-morrow,*" did I say? (thought Rodolph, as he parted from Drossi) well, come to-morrow then—but then will to-morrow prove *welcome* unto me. Let next day then, be still more welcome—but next day still must have a morrow, and that morrow, a to-morrow, which we might wish for, even to the very end of time.

CHAPTER XIX.

If his own life answer the straightness of his proceeding, it shall become him well; wherein if he chance to fail, he hath sentenced himself.

Is there no exorcist
 Beguiles the truer office of mine eyes?
 Is't real, that I see? SHAKESPEARE.

AT the seventh hour the following day, Lord Rodolph was superbly equipped and accoutred, as were Drossi and his three comrades. They met together in the hall, where the Countess, Lauria, Sylvia, and Carlo, were also assembled to receive them. The former looked unusually sad and cheerless, for which her husband greatly rebuked her; though at the same time, this presage of melancholy did not tend much to strengthen that fortitude which he had been told was so necessary he should possess on this momentous occasion. Carlo in the mean time (who thought no otherwise than that his Lord was really going to pay his duties to the Viceroy) was reporting to

Sylvia his last night's dreams, which prophesied no good, whilst, on the other hand, her's very much corresponded with his own.

Between the seventh and eighth hour, the Count and his party were mounted, and immediately proceeded on their rode to Cosenza. The former often looked back upon the proud walls of his stately Castle, and moved with that kind of sympathy, which there is no actually accounting for, he regarded them with the same uncommon anxiety, as when the tender father commits his beloved son to the doubtful mercies of the tempestuous ocean, and takes his last farewell, tincturing it at the same time with the bitter uncertainty of never beholding him again.

The Countess, with Lauria and Carlo, had ascended the ramparts, and there the former waved to Rodolph, till distance robbed her of his sight; and here also, whether it was from the present noble appearance and deportment that her husband carried with him on this occasion, or some other secret cause, but she moistened her waving hand with many a scalding tear;—whilst Carlo, still more to encrease the depression of her spirits, was amusing Lauria and Sylvia close by, with telling them on what he dreamt last night, and which simply purported—“That his lord had been carried off in a terrible whirlwind, and that he had never been heard of afterwards.”

This conversation, however, was cut off in its infancy; for, on turning round to another part of the ramparts, they discovered five horsemen, galloping with the utmost fury, at the distance of about two miles from the castle. In this manner they rode onward in a direct line to them, till they halted in an open extended plain, thinly encumbered with trees, to about a mile farther, where, after dismounting one by one, both men and horses suddenly disappeared. Here arose a fine field for conjecture and argument, between Lauria, Sylvia and Carlo; the former immediately declaring, that there must be some secret passage there to the castle, as she had often read of such things in her grandame's great book of spirits and necromancers.—“ Oh! Jesu Christi! I have no doubt of it, Signiora (rejoined Carlo, after expressing a wish that the Count and Drossi had been present to have seen them) and no doubt also, they are some robbers, who have haunted this Castle, and frightened all of us, as they have done, out of our senses, merely to drive us away, and secure it to themselves.

Lady Isabella, and the rest, having abandoned their situation on the ramparts, the former slowly retired to her own chamber, there to indulge her sorrowful reflections (for sorrow will ever have its melancholy indulgences) in privacy and solitude. Signiora Lauria, however, with her page and

Sylvia, quickly descended into the great hall; and now, for the first time, the arched door that led into the cloisters, and which had been obliquely and carelessly left ajar by Rodolph, caught Carlo's attention. A stirring inclination immediately possessed him to survey this dreary part of the Castle, but his fears and superstition checked these rising emotions. Whatever, nevertheless, was his sacred and intuitive dread, they were compelled to yield to the urgent solicitations of Signiora Lauria, to accompany her thither; for whenever any mysterious object appeared, her curiosity was sure, in general, to predominate over her superstitious fancies.

Down the aisles of the cloisters, therefore, at her request, they all sallied, though with slow, cautious, and trembling steps; Sylvia hanging close upon Carlo's arm, the fears of one communicating themselves inseparably to the other two—At length, they reached the cymetry, where, like Rodolph before, they soon discovered the great bell, a prostrate object of the heavens irresistible powers. The sight of the gaping and shattered monuments, however, had a far different effect on their respective feelings than they had upon the stubborn ones of the Count and Drossi. They inspired them with the most religious awe, which found an innate and consolatory vent, in devout acknowledgments to the superior and vast powers of the Supreme

Being. For Carlo's good sense and quick discrimination had immediately attributed this devastation to the late furious tempest. Having now, however, satisfied their untainted consciences, by pouring forth their holy and sincere orisons, they prepared to abandon this awful charnel-house; when, lo!—another fresh circumstance (to them horrible indeed) fastened upon their sight, and almost momentarily deprived them of their senses:—For, near the porch of the cymetry they discovered a shallow grave, scarce more than two feet deep, and in which lay a corpse, apparently quite fresh. The features were quite distinct; and by the few hairs left on the head and beard, which were as white as silver, they denoted the appearance of good old age. Lauria and Sylvia had nearly fainted beneath their fears. Carlo, nevertheless, had the courage left to re-examine the corpse, and thought he had seen the features before, but where he could not possibly divine? The women, however, cried out "*to be gone.*"—The only words, in fact, that they could articulate. Carlo, immediately took each by the arm, and moved quicker backward through the cloisters into the hall, by three leagues in pace swifter than that in which they came. The page however, before he finally abandoned the cymetry, could not refrain from observing a pick-axe and chisel laying on the pave-

ment, near the grave ; which discovery instantly implied to him, “ That the corpse had been but just conveyed into the charnel-house, and that the secret resident, or residents of the Castle, had fled on distinguishing their approaching footsteps and murmuring voices ; I have it in evidence, however (bethought Carlo innately) that no fresh murder has been committed within these mysterious walls, as neither symptoms of violence, or signs of poison were perceptible on the body or countenance of the corpse.

But hold—the will of fate draws near, and we must now leave the simple Carlo, the beauteous Lauria, and the innocent Sylvia, to enjoy their respective arguments and reflections upon this late strange occurrence, whilst we return to matters of greater import.

The Count, after he had lost sight of the fortress, rode off in full speed to Cosenza, and was received at the castle gate with all due military respect and form by the Viceroy’s body-guard ; and where he ordered Gabot, Michael, and Pietro to await his return. In the court-yard, where crowds had assembled to satisfy their curiosity, he was met by the Chevalier D’Arcos, who sprang forward to meet him, clasping him at the same time in his aged arms, with all the energy of unshaken friendship and immutable goodness of soul. The Chevalier, however, not being able to

refrain from letting fall the deep sigh of regret, Rodolph supported his drooping spirits with the assurance that all would go shortly well, and as he could wish. "Then heaven be praised for that! (exclaimed D'Arcos) and on that confirmation I can support this trying scene with fortitude and patience."

On the stairs leading into the grand hall, the Count was received by his old friend and brother-soldier, Orfini, captain of the Citadel, to whom he took this opportunity of delivering up his sword. Being then conducted by him to the interior, attended by the Chevalier and Drofi, Rodolph made his obeisance to the Duke Reignier, who was sitting in his robes, at the top of the hall, in the great chair of state. In the centre were the judges and the counsellors of the law, to whom, he also made his second obedience. A seat was then prepared for himself and D'Arcos (Drofi taking his station behind) towards the lower part of the hall—All was now hushed—an awful serenity every where prevailed—and all sat in silent expectation for the accuser, who soon afterwards appeared from an antichamber, on the right side of the hall, magnificently habited; and from his splendid figure he seemed more suited for the celebration of a royal nuptial, than the solemnity of a court of justice. Having made his general obeisance, he delivered his

sword over to captain Montoni, and then seated himself with thorough calmness and bold assurance, opposite to Rodolph, tho' at some paces distant.

At the sight of this, the Count's blood flushed up like a fountain to his palid countenance, whilst his big heart almost burst with anger and revenge.

The president of the council having read over the charges of accusation, Lord Rodolph pleaded guiltless; and then defied his enemy to come forward and substantiate, if he could, what he had so traitorously advanced.

Philip Count Contarini on this, coolly rose up, and pledged the forfeit of his head, if he did not make his case appear clear and incontrovertible to the court and the whole face of Italy.—With that he began his primary charge; and in order to render the foundation of his impeachment the still stronger, by fixing a ground-work, laid by the dæmon of revenge, he opened first by criminating Prince Rinaldo himself with having debauched the Count's daughter; and which he affirmed was the main cause that afterwards led to the perpetration of the murder. On this first point, Contarini dwelt with much diffuseness, more cunning, and most exquisite cruelty, cutting the heart of Rodolph in twin, almost at every word—piercing his agonized mind with the most bitter retrospections of his long-lost, ruined, aban-

doned, and beauteous Santa-Maria. He next proceeded to relate the minutest circumstances of Bernardine's and Goddard's first interview with Count Rodolph on the subject of Prince Rinaldo's assassination—The fair promises with which he allured them on to perpetrate the infernal act—The wilful manner in which he formed his plot for carrying the murder into effectual execution; and the still more artful method he contrived for preventing all possible means for an hereafter discovery—“ But God is just (exclaimed the impious hypocrite) and will not suffer murder even in this world to go unpunished.”

Contarini began next to relate the most particular circumstances of the *actual* perpetration of the Prince's assassination.—He boldly asserted that Bernardine and Goddard had laid in ambush for Rinaldo and Manfredi, in the adjacent woods, and that strictly conformable to the directions of Lord Rodolph.—That they fell in with him and Manfredi there, and rushing upon the former by surprise, like hungry tygers from their covered dens, had savagely murdered his noble kinsman, with wounds as innumerable, as inhumanly dealt.—But that being too intent upon the lion, they had suffered the jackall to escape.—Now fearful, therefore, of detection, from the vigilance of Manfredi (against which my Lord Rodolph, gave them fit lessons

and due caution) these miserable tools and victims of his great revenge, and still greater ambition, sought for their future safety in their immediate flight.

These last words of Contarini's cowed, indeed, the better part of Rodolph.—His fortitude from them encountered wounds, sharper than the keenest scymitar could deal. Still that natural anxiety, which every man experiences for life and honour, when plunged almost to the very verge of despair and infamy, led him to rest his all upon the solemn assurances of the unknown recluse in the Castle; and if he *indeed* is the saved Manfredi, then (thought Rodolph) he and he alone, must best know his Prince's *real fate*; and, as yet, I will venture boldly on the hazard of this fatal die.

Contarini having gone through his first charge, he ordered his witnesses to be called and placed at the bar—when—what was the astonishment, terror, and the feelings of Rodolph, when he saw himself confronted by Bernardine and Goddard.—He trembled, turned more livid than livid death itself, and so great were his agitations, his tumults of body and mind, so strong and visible, as struck the attention and excited the pity of the whole court. Perceiving, however, that the president was about to proceed in the examinations, he rose with much perturbation, and requested that the witnesses

might be examined apart; which being immediately assented to by the court, Goddard was ordered to withdraw.

Bernardine then entered upon his evidence, which was a mere echo of what the Count Contarini had himself advanced.

Goddard being next brought forward, his evidence also tallied so exactly with his comrade's, as made the guilt of Rodolph appear in the clearest manner, upon the first charge.

The Count was so choaked with rage, despair, and surprize, at the close tutored manner in which these villains gave their respective evidences, that his passions for some moments checked his utterance. He, however, rose, and interrogated the former, how he and his comrade had passed their lives, since the supposed murder of Prince Rinaldo?

"We have lived by plunder and destruction (replied Bernardine) in forests and in caves; for expelled through fear from all society, and hardened by the first base murder we had committed, we did not stop at committing the very worst of cruelties."

"By St. Januarius (exclaimed Rodolph, darting a look of the utmost fierceness at Contarini) but you have been *lessoned* well. But say again—how came ye to the knowledge and *tutorage* of Count Philip there?"

"In this our long career (rejoined Bernardine) justice at length overtook us; for

having heard by a spy, dispatched on purpose from our party, that my Lord Contarini, was on his route to Sala; we concealed ourselves in a little forest, near the River Molse, and then pouring upon them in their rear, in the Vale of Diana, we plundered his whole suite, and in the skirmish severely wounded Count Philip. By the vigilance, however, of captain Montoni and one Hurtado, we were traced and detected in the haunts and caves we had formed in the sides of the Appenine Mountains. —Conscious, therefore, that we had too much injured him and his already, we begged to see him in our *dungeon*, and there made a full confession of Prince Rinaldo's murder, and our being engaged by you, my Lord, to commit the bloody deed."

Rodolph was now doubly struck with surprize and confusion, at the well-concerted style in which Bernardine gave in his evidence. Every past circumstance that had taken place in Bianca's cottage, now occurred with terror to his imagination. The names of Montoni and Hurtado were more terrible than the block, which he now saw staring him in the face. Every collateral occurrence shot like furies thro' his recollection, and almost forced him into the credit of that, which most of the court had already began to regard as incontrovertible. Surely (conceived the almost self-convicted Count) this bitter enemy of mine has conversed with the same

secret recluse, the same mysterious mortal, spirit, devil, witch, or whatever it may be, who has discovered all the truths to him, the more to abuse and deceive me.

“ But then (continued Rodolph) were ye not suborned or menaced by some fair promises or cruel threats, thus to come forward, and swear so falsely against my life and honour?”

Here Bernardine hesitated, but the court immediately insisting on a replication, he answered—“ *Yes*—We were promised a full pardon for all our offences, and absolution for all our crimes, if we would come forward, and confess our murder of Prince Rinaldo, before the grand council of the state.”

“ How did Count Philip, (repeated Rodolph)—how did he express himself, when you made this confession, was it in pity or anger, joy or exultation?”

“ In joy, my Lord.”

“ This evident subordination, most reverend Signiors (rejoined the Count, with more than usual energy) will, I hope, invalidate this man’s evidence, and prove that malice, hatred, and treachery, were the ground-works of this base accusation.”

“ My Lord Rodolph (replied the president of the council) though this confession may shew malice on the part of Count Philip, still it cannot crush or weaken the witness’s evidences, without you can adduce

proofs of a stronger nature, to invalidate his testimony.

The accused, on this, addressed the Court as thus :

“ I now rise in the most solemn manner, to declare my innocence against this foul accusation, that has been so artfully made against me ; and, so far as regards the murder of Prince Rinaldo, I have the most presumptive evidence to prove, that he is now actually in existence.” On this, Rodolph conveyed the most bitter retorts on his accuser, whom he directly charged with having suborned both Bernardine and Goddard, under the specious pretences of promising them pardon in this world for their enormous crimes ;—an immediate implication, he said, on the justice, wisdom, and integrity of the Neapolitan laws, and its administrators ;” —and afterwards buoying them up with false hopes of ablution in the world to come, thereby signifying that the church was as much in his grasp as the law, and both equally at his controul and discretion. Impiously making sport of the ministers of ecclesiastical, as well as of ætherial justice, to gratify his malice, revenge, and ambition.

“ Place before your eyes (exclaimed Rodolph with encreased animation) a miserable criminal, condemned to suffer torments on the rack, for one poor murdered fellow-creature ; and let the man of power descend to his dreary dungeon, and pro-

mise him life and absolution, if he will not afterwards new-set the edge of his already bloody poignard, and plunge it in the hearts of scores, to satisfy his redeemer's meditated revenge. There are some kingdoms (continued the Count) where liberty and the laws are respected and adored, and where they would tell you, that a man condemned, is afterwards dead, both to the law and the world, and therefore, no fit tool, to cut out the work of yon accuser, there.—Oh! most reverend Signiors, from this, I tax not the equal equity of our Neapolitan laws;—but when I behold *that—Count Contarini!* who would falsely swear away my life, and despoil me of that fame which my good sword has acquired by the dint of arms, and that honour also, which ever had been attached to the house of Rodolph, until it was sullied by the kindred name of Contarini. My very heart boils with the overscorching heat that fires my blood beneath. To strengthen, also, his artful accusations, he has even criminated the noble person whose cause he has attempted to espouse—Has cruelly, too, endeavoured to wring and cut in twain the tender feelings of a parent, by drawing, in the most glaring and infamous characters, the misfortunes of his child. Had Count Philip come forward to impeach me as the murderer of our noble kinsman, on the solid ground of fair and impartial justice; had an honest conscience stirred him

on, he might have then been entitled to the acknowledgments of this court, and his whole country. But, no! to the extreme of this, he has founded his claims on malice, hatred, treachery, and subornation—self-interest, unprincipled self-interest, is the basis on which he springs—to build his fortunes upon the ruins of my head and house. But you, most noble Duke, and ye, wise counsellors of impartial justice, cannot (concluded Rodolph) pay aught attention to the evidence of these confessed plunderers and murderers; they that have so long existed on the miseries and destruction of their fellow-creatures; and at last, to save themselves, under the sable wing of power and corruption, from those heavy punishments which that perjurer, Bernardine himself, has even confessed he merited long ago, have now come forward to save their carcases from the tortures of the rack, to impeach me of a crime which never had an existence, and which nothing but the extremity of malice, and the proverbial artifices of Count Philip *there*, could ever have found invention sufficient to maintain with the superficial glare of probability, as he has already done.

Having thus briefly replied to the first charge of his accuser, Rodolph produced Drossi, as an evidence, relative to the circumstances that had lately taken place in the Castle (and with which the reader has been so recently acquainted with); but

as they appeared of so weak, fictitious, unsubstantial, and improbable a nature, the court would scarcely hear him through with patience.

Count Philip then rose up, to make his second charge; but the president interrupted him, by observing, that previous to that, the court would take the first into consideration. He then ordered the accuser and the accused to be conducted into different chambers, under their respective guards, till the opinion of the council could be decided.

On this they made their obeisances as they entered.—Far different, however, were the sensations of Contarini and Rodolph, at this momentous period.—The one retired with exultation in his countenance and deportment; the other departed absorbed in anxiety and despair; and what touched him more poignantly than all, on quitting the court, was the sight of his friend, the Duke Reignier, who sat disconsolate in his chair of state, with his purple wrapped over his face, evidently regretting the unhappy issue of that day's eventful trial.

The council, after a few minutes' deliberation, unanimously agreed, that John Count Rodolph was guilty of the murder of his kinsman—the most noble Prince Rinaldo.—It now, therefore, only remained with the Viceroy, to sign and seal the sen-

tence—When—Captain Orsini suddenly entered the assembly, and said—“ That the noble and valiant John Count Rodolph, was no more; having poignarded himself the very instant he had gained his footing in the anti-chamber of the hall.”——But hold—for here must we dedicate a tributary tear to the memory of the brave and honest Drossi, who like a Roman lived, and like a Roman died.—Drossi could not survive the blemished honour of his generous master, and undaunted captain.—No! Lord Rodolph had led him on to battle; fought on the side of him, spear poised with spear, sword raised with sword—With him, therefore, he was resolved to die; and plucking the crimson poignard from *his* master’s heart, he buried it in his *own*, embracing him as he fell; whilst the gushing blood,

——In friendly kisses told,

Like some fond and amorous pair,

the intermingling ecstasies of past mutual endearments.—And now, farewell, honest Drossi—thou favourite darling of my fancy! and o’er thy grave, be this thine epitaph:

—— ——— A merrier man,

Within the limits of becoming mirth,

I never spent an hour’s talk withal. SHAKESPEARE.

CHAPTER XX.

Lo! by thy side where rape and murder stands;
 Now give some 'surance that thou art revenge:
 Stab them, or tear them on thy chariot-wheels,
 And then I'll come and be thy waggoner,
 And whirl along with thee, about the globe;
 Provide, too, proper palfries, black as jet,
 To hale thy vengeful waggon swift away,
 And find out murders in their guilty caves;
 And when thy car is loaden with their heads,
 I will dismount, and by thy waggon-wheel
 Trot like a servile footman all day long.

SHAKESPEARE.

PHILIP CONTARINI, having been straightways made acquainted with these welcome tidings, he rushed exultingly into the hall, and prayed that sentence might be passed upon the second charge, before the council broke up. Lord Rodolph had given a negative proof of his guilt, by the impious steps he had taken to rescue himself from the horrors of a public execution. The court on this, was on the point of consulting relative to this death-hunting appeal of the Count, when they were disturbed and alarmed, by a sudden and violent noise in the yard, which was succeeded by the distracted appearance of a noble and beautiful youth, who precipitately entered the hall, and begged protection and justice for himself and his friends. Before this request, however, could be immediately acceded to, the Viceroy demanded to know the cause of this abrupt and un-

precedented intrusion into the presence of representative majesty?

"To seek protection and justice from the presence of that august representation," firmly replied the stranger.

"The protection you require (answered the Duke, struck with the noble mien and intrepid air of the youth, which conveyed with them much honour and an undaunted spirit) shall be granted to your friends. Therefore, let them be forthwith admitted into the open court. But say, against whom do you thus boldly demand our justice?"

"Against yonder Count, *there* (said he, casting a look of the most penetrating fierceness on the astonished *Contarini*, and which struck the whole court with equal amazement)!—it is there I point the finger of accusation, and do directly charge him, in the open face of this whole council, with the foul and complicated crimes of *murder*, *sacrilege*, and *incest*, upon the immediate forfeiture of my head, if I make not good all these my accusations."

"Your name, stranger?"

"Ferdinand, son and heir to John Count Rodolph—The unhappy victim of some seven summers miserable captivity, from the hell-inventive artifices of my father's most perjured accuser, his most rancorous enemy, Philip Contarini, *there*.—But now, armed with truths—most damnable truths—and protected by the impartial arm of justice, I will even sink him lower than

those howling fiends he has so long worshipped with security and success?"

At these last firm and solemn assurances, guilt, with her sable wings, perched upon the *shrinking crest of Contarini*, and he was attempting to retire from the hall—darting, as he turned, the most arrogant glances of disdain and distrust upon his bold accuser, as though none dare to circumvent his purpose; when the Viceroy interposed, and immediately ordered Signior Orsini to place a captain's guard over him, till he should fully answer the charges made against him by Ferdinand, with special care, also, that Betnârdine and Goddard should be closely watched, and lodged in a stronger place of security than that in which they now were. "In the mean time, you, (continued the just Reignier) see that you bring these heinous charges directly home to the nobleman you have so boldly accused, or your head becomes the just forfeiture of your failure—for—so justice must hereafter guide our councils, and the laws direct our sentence."

"On them, most noble Duke (rejoined Ferdinand, with more calmness, but with equal fortitude) I rest my doom."

"My Lords (exclaimed Contarini, stung with doubt, rage, and disappointment) this must be some young impostor, instigated by the intrigues of Rodolph's friends, to seek my life, and save their confiscated proper-

ties.—Count John's son and heir has been deceased these some years past."

"To the world I have (retorted Ferdinand, with a most contemptuous sneer) and thanks for that to thee, Lord Philip. But thou see'st withal, I have once more risen from oblivion, to precipitate thee into a worse abyss than slavery—aye, into irrecoverable shame and ignominy."

"Knowest thou, youth (said the Viceroy, in an accent of much softness) that thy once noble parent is no more?"

"I heard the rumour and manner of his death, most noble Duke, before I could force my passage to the hall. Oh! hapless delay (exclaimed Ferdinand, struggling hard to check his rising emotions) Oh! had we but rode swifter on the back of time, and spurred his stirring sides more deeply even in the haste and gallop, of but some few five minutes sooner, *then* had we stopped the fatal blow. But hold, (continued he, recollecting himself) let me not dedicate one single transitory tear to the memory of the sacred author of my existence, till I have rescued it from the infamy and guilt with which Lord Philip would have dispatched it to the grave!"

"Knowest thou, youth (added the Duke) that the wise and reverend council here assembled, have upon the clearest and most perfect evidence, found your deceased father guilty of the heinous charges pre-

ferred against him, by the noble Lord that you have in turn accused?"

"I know not much of that, most noble Viceroy (returned Ferdinand, with an air of modest triumph and rebuke) but this I know (and straight on purpose to save the time and patience of the reverend judges here assembled) I will now (producing at the same instant—a stranger, who had rushed forward, with four others, also, to the council chamber, and in the humble *attire of a pilgrim*) that I have here brought forward—one—whose powerful testimony will altogether prove the innocence of my sacrificed Sire—the malice, guilt, and infamy of Count Philip there—and how cautious even the wisest among the wisest of us should be in adjudging their fellow-creatures to death and infamy."—On this—the stranger threw off his *pilgrim's attire*, and to the astonished eyes of the Viceroy and his whole court—appeared—*The Prince Rinaldo!!!*—

Fain would I delineate the looks, actions, and emotions of the contrasted characters, who represented this eventful scene. Let the villain Philip, however, be drawn shrinking deep into the fell abyss of despair, guilt, rage, disappointment, and destruction inevitable: and, now would he have followed up his victim's late rash example, had not Orsini stopped his arm, and wrenched the poignard from his grasp—thus happily preserving his life for a

few short hours, that he might hear and feel such charges of horror, and compunctions of remorse, as would send him freezing to the dreadful scaffold.

At the other part of the hall,; and, on the side of Ferdinand; had stood all along a rude and boisterous looking man. His beard was black and bushy. The ocean appeared to have been his natural element, and the general fierceness of his countenance and mien formed, in short, a striking contrast to the youthful, modest, and beautiful features of the minstrel Valentine, who was standing close by, with the fatal casket in his hand, and his lute strung across his shoulders; whilst behind them, finishing the group, stood the healthful and vigorous Sebastian, with the aged and silver-bearded Launcelot.

Rinaldo, after having received the congratulations of the whole council, was on the point of making his way towards the Viceroy, who was prepared to receive him, when the general attention was for a short time called off, to the lower part of the hall, by a fresh scene of discovery, which roused the general sympathy more forcibly than the one already made—

For, Valentine, surprised and overcome at the sudden change made from the pilgrim to to the prince, had fell lifeless at the feet of Ferdinand; whilst D'Arcos, on the other hand, who had continued in the anti-chamber, leaving the gaping wound of—

his dead kinsman with many a scalding tear, being now informed of the strange reverse of circumstances that had taken place, rushed into the hall, and the first object that came across him happening to be the fainting minstrel, who was supported on Ferdinand's knee, his head reclining backwards on his breast, and his long tresses hanging over his supporter's shoulders—he exclaimed aloud—"Gracious God! can this really be, or do my aged eyes, dimmed with tearful sorrow, deceive my senses?—No—it is *him*—it is *her*—it is Florizel—it is—Santa-Maria—The dear child of my murdered friend—Oh! Rodolph, would that the sight of this thy long-lost daughter would re-animate thy cold body! But that being now impossible, I will be her future parent—Yes, thou darling of my fancy (perceiving her revive by degrees) I will hereafter be thy father—thy protector—thy all in all."

The lively interest that this affecting groupe excited among the noble spectators who surveyed the tender scene, requires most the command of the pencil than the pen. Rinaldo, indeed, expressed the first and greatest emotions of surprise; for as the Minstrel's head lay reclined on his friend's bosom, he discovered his own picture depending from the youth's neck.—But, as Santa-Maria (for we will call her the *minstrel* no more) began to show gradual signs of recovery; so did they begin to re-

gain their speech; and Ferdinand first catching up the tender declarations of D'Arcos, joyously exclaimed, "No, believe me, my good and right noble friend, that must not be—for—I am the brother of Santa-Maria, and to that endearing title must hereafter add those of father and protector."

"Now, by mine honour (rejoined the Prince) that must neither be—I have a claim superior to ye both—a claim registered in heaven, and which must be recorded on earth. None, therefore, shall dispute my title of protectorship to Santa-Maria, as I already *am—her husband!*"

The generous Duke, after having taken the opportunity of congratulating Ferdinand on thus happily recovering a sister, and Rinaldo also of having recovered a wife; he next recommended them to entrust Santa-Maria to the tender care of D'Arcos, as the sudden influx of surprise that might come upon her when perfectly recovered, at meeting with them both so unexpectedly, would probably once more suspend the re-action of her intellectual powers. In the mean time (concluded the Viceroy) I shall request of the good Signior Orfini here, to send the Lady Santa-Maria all necessary female attendance, and procure for her, apparel suitable to her sex and dignity."

The noble-hearted D'Arcos being therefore entrusted, for the present, with the

sole charge of his adopted child, he led her to an interior apartment, where he was soon after joined by Orsini's wife herself, and her beautiful daughter.

" And now, my young friends (said the Duke, preparing to resume his chair of state; and the judges being again re-seated) we will once more proceed to the conclusion of this day's eventful trial.—That done, (concluded he) I shall expect that you will relate to me the mysterious source from which these marvellous circumstances have so unexpectedly burst upon us, and which have even almost made us discredit the very power of our senses."

CHAPTER XXI.

And thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges.

Then gave I her (so tutor'd by my art)
A sleeping potion, which so took effect
As I intended; for it wrought on her
The form of death.—

————— a thousand knees
Ten thousand years together, naked, fasting,
Upon a barren mountain, and still winter,
In storm perpetual, could not move the gods
To look that way thou wert. SHAKESPEARE.

DURING this interval, the guilty Philip attempted to take the opportunity of the confusion and surprise that prevailed, and effect his escape; but the guards placed over him by Orsini, were too vigilant for him to complete his design.—Upon questioning, therefore, one of Momoni's

creatures, relative to the cause that had excited this interruption; and being informed thereof, the dreadful answer crept like poison through his veins. His whole body shuddered at these portentous sounds of his approaching destiny with horrors inconceivable.—He could have stooped and dashed his head against the stones with despair and rage, had he not been supported by his insufferable pride.—“What (thought Philip within himself) has Santa-Maria rose up in judgment too against me? Am I not, moreover, about to be accused for sacrilege and incest?—Then it is but too evident that I have by some means been betrayed by *Father Conrad*. Oh! hell and torments! But as I have been caught in my own toils (internally concluded the exasperated Contarini) and can find no means to extricate myself, I will not meanly crouch to those who have thus entrapped me, but bay them with my malice to the very last!”

On this, Count Philip, perceiving his accuser prepared to open his second charge, he arose, and begged some time to get himself ready to make answer thereto; but Ferdinand replied, “That if his guilty conscience had not already anticipated some fresh foul deeds, he could not possibly be prepared to answer till he had first heard what was now about to be brought against him.—Besides (added he) the importance of the present charges (more mo-

mentous by far than were ever recorded on our Sicilian annals) cannot admit of delay, as they immediately involve the general happiness, innocence, honour, and character of two noble houses in this day's awful decision."

The Duke and council, on this, requested Ferdinand to begin his charges of accusation. He then took the casket from Sebastian, and thus addressed the Court :

" Most noble Duke, and reverend Signiors——Before I enter upon the grand charges of sacrilege and incest, I will briefly disclose a chain of wickedness, malice, and treachery, upon the evidence of this naval captain here—that will show in the most glaring colours, the farther guilt of Count Philip, and at the same time throw a strong light upon the remarkable events that have attended the fate of this day.

" The combat (continued Ferdinand) which took place some seven years ago between Count Philip and myself, may be still remembered in Naples—I was the conqueror—This fatal conquest, however, stuck close to the enraged and disappointed Contarini, nor did he wait long for an opportunity of glutting his hatred and revenge ; for no sooner had he recovered from his wounds, than, getting himself supported by a party of his creatures, he fell upon myself and my servant, Sebastian [there] and surpris'd, seized, hooded, and bound

us as we were returning, one dark tempestuous night, to Naples, before we had leisure for thought, much more resistance. From thence we were hurried onwards for four leagues with the greatest rapidity, till we arrived at the port-town of Salerno, where there was a vessel prepared for us, riding under the command of Captain Corsi [now before the court.] We were instantly conveyed in a tartana, and hoisted aboard like a couple of galley slaves. At this time, we were alike ignorant of our future destiny, and the villains who had thus treacherously deprived us of our rights and liberties; for when Count Philip and his party seized us, they were all masked.—I will not fatigue the Court with the dreadful thoughts and sensations I experienced on this cruel occasion.—Torn, as I then conceived, for ever, from my family, my friends, and my country—Suffice it, therefore, to say, that Captain Corsi had been scarcely one day out at sea, when he was surprised, attacked, and captured by a barbarian sloop of war, and carried into Angola, where we were immediately hurried farther up the country, and all sold for slaves to a Giaga chief.

“ Captain Corsi on this occasion, stung with remorse, disappointment, and despair, took the opportunity of confessing to me, that Count Philip had induced him, from the alluring promises of a considerable bribe, and honourable appointments when

he returned, to convey us into the Mediterranean, to land us afterwards on one of the most unfrequented islands, and there to murder both myself and my servant.— But to return to Angola. There, my noble Lord, we continued nearly seven years in the most miserable state of abject slavery, till the Giaga chief having engaged in a war, with a neighbouring tribe, the few of us that were left alive, made our escape back to the capital, where we claimed the protection of Don Gonzago, the Portuguese Viceroy. The chief, however, on his return, flushed with conquest, and exasperated on hearing that we had fled and taken refuge in Angola, dispatched an ambassador thither for our immediate restitution. The King of Angola, willing to avoid the enmity of so powerful a Giaga, was compelled to resist all intreaties of Don Gonzago, for our future protection. From this, we began to give up all thoughts of ever returning again to our native shore; when a fortunate star suddenly appeared, that rescued us from the horrid gulph of slavery and wretchedness in which we were once more on the brink of being plunged in; for as it soon happily appeared, there was in the Viceroy's court a noble traveller, who in the humble disguise of a *pilgrim*, had gone far and near to administer the sweet balsam of hope and

comfort, to the disconsolate and needy christian.

“ I need not add (continued Ferdinand) for I perceive you seem to suspect it all around, that this good *pilgrim* was no other than Prince Rinaldo.—It was even so, and having soon made ourselves known to each other, we told the stories of our mutual fortunes. I now, for the first time, heard the sad tale of my sister’s supposed shame, which had drawn my noble kinsman from his native Castle; determined (as he then said) to wear the humble attire of a pilgrim till time had revealed (which it has now happily done) the cause and mystery of her deep disgrace. Having promised, however, if of this world, to return to his castle, in four years from the period of his first setting out, either to behold again his friend and guardian, the good Signior Manfredi, or shed the tear of tributary gratitude over his honoured dust; we immediately set out from Angola for Italy, whither we safely arrived some seven days ago. As I wished, however, first to learn the fortunes of my house, after so long and cruel an absence; Captain Corsi landed me on the island of Capri, from whence I crossed the gulf to Naples, whilst he steered his course to Messina; where I had previously appointed to meet Rinaldo, “ *on the first evening of this month.*” In my way thither, however, (concluded Ferdinand, unfastening the casket, and taking out the

fatal scroll) I by a providential train of miraculous incidents (and all of which, I will afterwards relate and fully prove to the whole court, if necessary for me, to be called upon so to do) obtained this parchment, which will evidence against Count Philip, both here and hereafter—Aye, will sink him millions of fathoms deep in hell—deep, as that once sacrilegious and incestuous tool of his—*Conrad—the Carthusian friar!!*!”

Here, Contarini was about to object against any written testimonies being produced in court, when the sound of Conrad's name cleaved his tongue to the roof of his mouth.—Despair and death now stared him in the face, and he already felt the avenging axe coming in contact with his guilty head.

Ferdinand now passed the mysterious scroll over to the president of the council, requesting him at the same time, to publish its contents aloud to the court—“They being (he observed) of too horrid a nature for a brother to read himself—nay, almost too horrid for a brother, or a Christian even to hear.”

On this, the president read out the manuscript as thus; but with what surprize, horror, tumult of mind, and agitation of soul, the reader can best conceive.

“Sacred to the memory and honour of

“Signiora Santa-Maria, sole daughter

“ of John Count Rodolph and Isabel-
 “ la his wife.”

“ Oh! most amiable and most injured lady,
 “ read this and tremble; and trem-
 “ bling, curse—curse bitterly; for at
 “ every curse, must my tortured soul feel
 “ fresh agonies, in the unavoidable, in-
 “ extricable, abyss of damnation.—Big
 “ drops of sweat fall down my guilty
 “ cheeks, like snow-drops from the
 “ mountain tops.—But, oh! not to re-
 “ late this tale of horror, would make
 “ me doubly guilty.—Involving thee,
 “ thy fame, thy chastity, and all, in one
 “ mysterious grave of infamy and obli-
 “ vion.—Secrecy, avaunt!—For lo! me-
 “ thinks, I view old Time shaking his
 “ hoary head, and with his finger point-
 “ ing to my pen, advance and say—
 “ *This mystery must not, shall not be bu-*
 “ *ried with the dead.*——Oh! Time, I
 “ thank thee for this consolatory hope
 “ —Thou hast made me more eager to
 “ pursue my purpose, lest death comes
 “ too quickly, and snatches me from
 “ the deed.———Know then, most
 “ lovely and injured saint, that the guil-
 “ ty writer of this, is named *Conrad*,
 “ once a monk in the Carthusian monas-
 “ tery—Youngly initiated in the luxu-
 “ ries and debaucheries of that order—
 “ I dedicated my whole time and
 “ thoughts to the gratification of my lusts
 “ and passions.—Gifted, nevertheless,

“ with the exterior appearance of piety and devotion, I acquired access to
 “ some of the first families in Naples, as
 “ their ghostly confessor. Among
 “ these were your injured parents,
 “ that of the Count Contarini, together
 “ with the Counts Mazzini, and
 “ D’Arcos;—proud, mighty, but
 “ fatal connections,—fatal! indeed,
 “ to my peace and happiness, as they
 “ first led me on to infamy and blood.—
 “ The senior Prince Rinaldo was the
 “ innocent cause. Oh! noble martyr
 “ to jealousy and revenge, if possible
 “ look down upon me with an eye of
 “ commiseration—but that cannot be—
 “ so, to proceed—the marked preference that Count Mazzini’s beautiful daughter gave to Lord Rinaldo,
 “ when betrothed to the senior Contarini, stung him to the soul; their subsequent marriage, however, irritated
 “ him to madness and desperation.—
 “ Thus enraged and disappointed, he
 “ watched closely for some deep revenge;—for three years, however,
 “ the Prince and his wife entirely resided at their Castle in the south;
 “ but when they returned to Naples—
 “ here let me be brief—He had recourse for vengeance, to *poison*—yes,
 “ to *poison*—and prevailed on me to be
 “ that *poisoner*—accursed deed—Full occasions suited the infernal purpose,

“ for though then but young, I was the
 “ Prince’s confessor, and in recompence
 “ for all his bounties, I took the foul
 “ opportunity of Signior Manfredi’s ab-
 “ sence, when his Lord was afflicted
 “ with a severe indisposition, to remove
 “ a phial of medicine from off the shelf,
 “ and in its place supplied a mixture of
 “ slow, but certain *poison*. This had a
 “ gradual and fatal effect, and Rinaldo,
 “ my first patron, fell an untimely victim
 “ to my arts and treachery. His death,
 “ however, did not escape the suspi-
 “ cions of Manfredi, and he had them
 “ physically confirmed.———Under-
 “ standing, therefore, that these suspi-
 “ cions fell strongly on me, I immedi-
 “ ately disappeared, and took shelter for
 “ several years in the Abbey of *Fossa-*
 “ *Nuova*.——Returning, however, once
 “ more to Naples, I soon gained the
 “ protection of the present Count Con-
 “ tarini, who soon made me the confi-
 “ dent of all his thoughts——nay, per-
 “ suaded me, not only to be the coun-
 “ sellor, but partner of all his most
 “ guilty actions.—The two following,
 “ stand foremost on the infernal file;
 “ —The first (they both most fatally re-
 “ lating to thee and thy kindred) was
 “ the depriving Ferdinand, thy brother,
 “ of his liberty and his life, by strata-
 “ gems the most diabolical.—The youth
 “ (oh! horrible to relate) was murdered

“ by our joint contrivances on one of the
 “ islands in the Mediterranean, with a
 “ favourite domestic, called Sebastian.
 “ —The other—hold—my blood thick-
 “ ens and congeals! I shake with terror
 “ at the thought.—My flesh creeps upon
 “ my very bones as I ruminate upon it.
 “ —But it must come forth—then forth-
 “ with let it come—deed of darkness!
 “ hell’s own direct progeny!—Count
 “ Philip had long surveyed thee (if it
 “ so be, that thou, sweet Santa-Maria,
 “ now perusest this) with a lustful eye.
 “ His soul burned impatiently to possess
 “ thy beauteous person. The enmities,
 “ however, that had so long subsisted
 “ between your families, prevented all
 “ chance of any access or intercourse;
 “ for the elder Contarini died, like a
 “ second Hamilcar, making his son, in
 “ the fourteenth year of his age, take
 “ the most sacred oath before the image
 “ of our Saviour and the Virgin Mary,
 “ that he would never make peace, al-
 “ liance, or friendship with the family
 “ of Rodolph; but, on the contrary,
 “ persecute, asperse, and pursue them
 “ to the furthest boundaries of ha-
 “ tred and revenge. But to return—
 “ Count Philip’s passions became in-
 “ flamed to the topmost pitch of mad-
 “ ness, when he discovered that
 “ you was deemed by mutual con-
 “ tracts and inclinations to wed the

“ Prince Rinaldo. He flew to me, like
 “ a tyger disappointed of his mate, for
 “ counsel—vowed to share his fortunes
 “ with me, if I could concert any plan
 “ to make thee the victim of his lust.—
 “ I meditated—I racked my thoughts,
 “ and at length hit upon a stratagem to
 “ satisfy his diabolical purposes, which,
 “ in the end, but too fatally succeeded.
 “ Accident, however, greatly assisted our
 “ designs, for Father Matalone, a pious
 “ brother of our order, and who was the
 “ virtuous confessor of the Lady Isabella,
 “ at this time lay sick, and as I at-
 “ tended him (or rather pretended
 “ to do so) with fraternal anxiety, I
 “ won his artless esteem. When any
 “ devotional call, therefore, requested
 “ his absence from the monastery, he
 “ deputed me, as his holy representa-
 “ tive on these occasions. So, then, it
 “ fatally happened, on the holyday of
 “ St. Januarius, that I came into thy fa-
 “ ther’s house, like some viper, to sting
 “ the dearest part of it. I found easy
 “ access to your person, and complain-
 “ ing of thirst, you gave me some cool-
 “ ing beverage to drink. Soon after, I
 “ invited you to drink also, in honour
 “ of our patron’s day; and, alas! you
 “ but too readily acquiesced; for, du-
 “ ring that short interval, I secretly con-
 “ trived to mingle a strong sleeping po-
 “ tion, which upon its taking due effect,

“ I too well knew, would answer the
 “ seeming appearances of death—Oh!
 “ wretched me, too well I said I knew
 “ it. For, when (horrible remembrance)
 “ any of the virtuous females of our
 “ convent held too rigidly out against
 “ my lustful purposes, I did administer
 “ this same sleeping potion, and when
 “ dead to every sense, enjoyed my will
 “ upon them. Then satisfied and pall-
 “ ed, dispatch them to the silent recesses
 “ of our graves, there to awake in all
 “ the horrors of a living death. Oh!
 “ my soul sickens at the impious re-
 “ collection. Despair is all I possess in
 “ return; for repentance after crimes
 “ like these sure can never avail!—But
 “ once more to return—This same
 “ sleeping potion had all its intended
 “ baneful effects on thee, thou loveliest
 “ sacrifice; and as thou wert supposed
 “ to be deceased, I was dispatched for,
 “ to sing requiems over your beautiful
 “ body. In this solemn office, Count
 “ Philip attended me, disguised as a bro-
 “ ther-monk; and in the absence of thy
 “ mother, the Lady Isabella, fully and
 “ grossly satisfied his impious lusts.—
 “ Nature, however, sleeping as you
 “ were, here gave a faint struggle against
 “ —But hold—no more—Modesty for-
 “ bids me to repeat the vile abuses he
 “ made of all his opportunities, nor the
 “ horrid satisfaction he enjoyed in the

“ idea of sending thee violated to the
 “ bed of Prince Rinaldo.—I can no
 “ more—save, indeed, that I afterwards
 “ heard of your *pregnancy*, and your
 “ sudden disappearance from Naples.—
 “ Stung now with remorse, guilt, fear,
 “ and despair, I fled the monastery, and
 “ retired to this cave—a miserable vic-
 “ tim of God’s present wrath and future
 “ vengeance—for, of God—nor of thee
 “ —or of the world, can I ever look up
 “ to, for pardon or for pity.

“ CONRAD.”

Never was horror and amazement more
 strongly depicted upon the features of
 man than on the present occasion. The
 president was so sorely shocked, that it was
 with difficulty he had been able to con-
 clude his office; and as he turned round to
 demand of Count Philip, if he had any de-
 fence to make to these heinous charges,
 his lips trembled, and his legs almost de-
 nied him their support.

Contarini now perceiving the just indig-
 nation that the Court entertained against
 him, and foreseeing that if he was to at-
 tempt a vindication of his villainy, it would
 ultimately prove ineffectual, and only an
 aggravation of his staring offences—he
 pleaded—*guilty*—appealing, the same time,
 to the clemency of the court, to mitigate
 his sentence from—death—for perpetual
 banishment.

Rinaldo and Ferdinand, on hearing this,

requested permission to withdraw, unwilling even to witness the last bitter scenes of a man whose life and thoughts had been so villainously employed in working their ruin, their misery, and destruction.—

Immediately, therefore, that they left the court, the Viceroy, with the unanimous consent of his council, proceeded to pass sentence on Philip Count Contarini—which was—“ That he should be immediately conducted from the Castle to the market-place, and suffer decapitation on the public scaffold”—the Duke being apprehensive on this occasion, that if the least delay was granted, the villain’s friends might effect his escape. He now therefore, lost sight of his wonted clemency, lest, in this glaring instance, it might defeat the end of justice.

He next proceeded to pass sentence on his accomplices, Bernardine and Goddard; which was—“ That they should first undergo the torture extraordinary, and afterwards be racked upon the wheel.

Count Philip being conducted to the public scaffold, under a strong escort, he met his fate with all that haughtiness and hardened fortitude that had marked the leading and cruel features of his character through life.—The wretches, Bernardine and Goddard, having made their confessions, in which they solemnly declared—“ that they had been *actually instigated by*

the Count Rodolph, to assassinate Prince Rinaldo; but that their hearts failing them when they came under the walls of the castle, they had resolved to return homewards; but in their way back, they fell in with a desperate banditti near the Apennine mountains, whom they immediately joined—That being afterwards taken (as before related) and recollecting the enmity that had so long subsisted between the families of Count Philip and Lord Rodolph, and at the same time, having heard it reported that Prince Rinaldo had been murdered by some unknown means or another, they sent for Contarini (in hopes to save their lives) to whom they fully related the strong chain of circumstances (as recorded before also) in which they had so leading a hold.—At this (they finally added) Count Philip immediately caught and promised them both pardon in this world and in the next, if they would abet him in the purposes he had *already begun to meditate against his kinsman's life.*—These wretches, then, being next brought, almost lifeless, upon the scaffold, suffered the most inventive torture that the rack could invent—and having expiated their heinous crimes by the most cruel death, their mangled bodies were afterwards gibbeted on the banks of the river Crati,

CHAPTER XXII.

Peace, ho! I bar confusion:
 'Tis I must make conclusion
 Of these most strange events.

SHAKSPEARE.

AS Rinaldo and Ferdinand, with Captain Corfi, Sebastian and Launcelot, were departing from the council-chamber, they were met in the middle of the hall by D'Arcos, whose apparent anxiety of countenance and manner strongly denoted some fresh misfortune to be upon the wing. He did not, however, keep them long in suspense, but proceeded to inform Lord Ferdinand, " that Santa-Maria could by no means be dissuaded from changing her minstrel's apparel, and even had solemnly affirmed, that she was neither your sister, nor the daughter of Lord Rodolph.---Then, ever and anon (continued the Chevalier) she would frantically exclaim—' My vow—my solemn vow, which is registered in heaven, and which all the powers of earth could not ever make her break.' Then again, she would ask me, if I had seen the fatal casket, or heard the mysterious scroll? And upon answering in the negative, the distracted Santa-Maria started, and wildly exclaimed—' No — didst thou say?—What, hast *thou* then not seen or heard them?—It's well.' Upon which, I saw her piercing eye darting towards the door, as though she once more meditated escap-

ing from my paternal care and protection. I have however (concluded D'Arcos) left her safe with the Signiora Orfini, and her tender daughter; and am now come to consult with ye, my young friends, how I shall proceed;—mystery so hangs on mystery, that I would fain not act up to my private judgment.”

“ But these mysteries now, my virtuous friend, and second father (exclaimed Ferdinand, pressing the Chevalier to his grateful bosom) shall vanish shortly, like a summer's cloud, before us.—And first (taking the manuscript from the casket, which Sebastian had brought with him out of court) receive this, and peruse it well—But let not horror blast and dim thine eyesight, till thou hast read it out. This is the mysterious scroll my sister talked of, and which her sudden loss of reason, with the subsequent confusion that succeeded, prevented both you and her from hearing read in open court.” On this, Ferdinand turned round upon Rinaldo, and with a significant smile, observed,—“ That he shrewdly suspected Santa-Maria's vow bore a very close analogy to his own.”—And after perceiving that D'Arcos had done perusing the monk's guilty confession (and that, too, attended with those sensations which may, from past circumstances, be easily conceived) he then requested him to convey the same to his sister; first opening the subject of it as delicately as

possible, and then softening the horrors of it, according to the apt terms of his own tenderness, judgment, and discretion. “This charm, my noble friend (concluded Ferdinand) will, perhaps, dissolve the vow you heard my sister, in her frenzy, mention.—And now commend my brotherly to her sisterly affections—my Lord Rinaldo’s love to her loves;—whilst, in the mean time, we will employ a sad hour in melancholy offices, and filial sorrows, o’er the breathless corpse of our lamented father.”

When Rinaldo and Ferdinand, therefore, entered the mournful chamber of death, they were somewhat surprised, on discovering three men in armour, with their beavers up, leaning their heads despondently upon the baskets of their swords, whose sharp points were firmly fixed in a broad bench, midway from them and the ground, and on which were stretched two crimson-clotted bodies. They soon, however, recognized in one, the features of Lord Rodolph; but not immediately recollecting the other, they enquired of Gabot, who was nearest to them—“To whom the other had once belonged; and by what strange fatality it claimed such death-like friendship with that of Count John’s?”—for the head of the former was lying obliquely upon the bosom of the latter. “That was once (replied Gabot,

with the deep sigh of regret) our comrade, Drossi, who being bravely determined not to out-live his Captain's blemished fame and honour, died as he did, and expired with him, almost in the same struggle. As you behold them now, my Lord (continued the warlike mourner) so it was they first fell together; and we equally resolved (Gabot strongly endeavouring here, but in vain, to conceal the struggling tear, which fell upon his burnished breast-plate) that as they had died undivided together, in the same manner as they had latterly lived, so they should still continue to retain the same posture and situation from which we raised them; for as you now see them stretched upon this wooden bier, so lay they on this bloody floor."

Ferdinand on hearing this plain-wrought tale, with infinite sympathy and energy exclaimed—"By my soul, Lord Rinaldo, but I recollect this Drossi well, a plain blunt man, of undaunted mettle, a favorite ever of my deceased father's, both at home and in the field.—And, many a time and oft, has he lulled my childish hours away with quaint conceits, full of mirth, but withal as inoffensive.—Now, by the sacred spirit of my fire, thou most faithful servant and soldier, thy steady love shall not pass unremembered.—Thy great valour, thy unshaken firmness, and thy heroic friendship, shall have a monumental testimony, which shall bear thy name with glory and

admiration to the latest times; and though religion forbids me to applaud the manner of thy death, still gratitude and esteem cannot force me to condemn the motive of it!"

This last subject now brought on a conference betwixt Ferdinand and Rinaldo, how the bodies should be disposed of in burial? When the former observing—That the taking them to Martorano castle would only tend to throw a dismal gloom, and an unavailable increase of sorrow and affliction over the mind of his lady-mother, which otherwise would be allayed and softened by their unexpected presence, after the absence of so many years: "This point, therefore, weighed (continued Ferdinand) it will be most prudent and congenial to the general feelings of us all, to have the honoured remains of my departed fire interred here at Cosenza, in the family cymetry of our kinsman D'Arcos. Where also the body of the brave and faithful Drossi shall likewise lie, couched as he now is, in death's cold embrace, by the side of his beloved lord and master."

From this, they had scarce time to pay the last tributary tear over the remains of Rodolph and his earthly associate, when they were summoned from without, by the voices of D'Arcos and Orsini, the latter of whom had come with an invitation from the Duke, to request their presence in the vice-regal apartment; before they

joined them, however, without, Ferdinand first bestowed on Gabot, Pietro, and Michael, each, a purse of gold, as a reward for their present fidelity, and as a memento of his future friendship. Enjoining them at the same time to keep strict watches over the bodies of their Lord and comrade, till they should see him again at Cosenza, which (he said) should be in three days' time, when he intended to preside over the funeral ceremonies himself.

We will now briefly pass over what occurred to the feelings of Santa-Maria (as related here by D'Arcos) on reading the fatal, though fortunate manuscript. *Her* sensations, indeed, must of course have displayed a higher colouring of horror and consternation than any of those which have as yet preceded us. But still, as we have touched upon this chord so often, and with so many variations; and as our history also draws so near to a conclusion, we will forbear to speak of the subject any more—There, then, let us condemn it to the same darkness from whence it had its birth.

The Chevalier, however; notwithstanding the solemnity that had possessed him at first, insinuated, with a smile, that now indeed he believed that the charm was dissolved, and from whence would spring a star that would force all eyes to go a gazing, and make you, my dearest Prince, the happiest of ethereal beings. For, oh! often has Santa-Maria, in the simple, though becom-

ing attire of a minstrel, raised my very soul to celestial joys. “ But your’s, my Lord (concluded D’Arcos) she will elevate to transports almost as enviable.”

This kindred party having joined the Duke, in his private apartment, where Orfini hinted to Rinaldo that Santa-Maria, with his wife and daughter, were also shortly expected; where nothing, in fact, of any particular consequence, occurred, saving such interrogatories and replications that tended to lead into the main points of the former parts of this history, and which being only a kind satisfaction to the Viceroy’s curiosity, we shall here also pass over.

Upon the Duke, however, asking Ferdinand how he became acquainted with his father’s reverse of fortunes, when not finding him at Naples—the sudden event of his trial at Cosenza—and the critical cause of his arrival thither, being, as it proved, only in the small period of five minutes betwixt his life and death?—The young Lord Rodolph briefly answered, that the vessel in which Prince Rinaldo had sailed, with Corsi, from the island of Capri, had been driven out to sea to a little distance, by a contrary wind, and detained them beyond the appointed hour of rendezvous. That the moment, however, he had effected his landing, he hastened to relate the happy discovery he had made of Santa-Maria’s innocence in the recess of Father Conrad,

which infused in him the spirit and activity of the bounding rein-deer.

From Messina, therefore, attended by the Captain and my servant, we rode on like lightning to the skirt of a wood, which leads directly to Martorano Castle; and where the Prince, anxious to embrace his old guardian, Signior Manfredi, not doubting also, at the same time (so natural is instinct in the human breast) that he must have heard something of Santa-Maria's fortunes, during his long absence, and those likewise of my family; we alighted from our horses, and pushed forward to a secret and interior part of the Castle, through a long subterraneous passage, known only to himself and his guardian. But here (continued Ferdinand) I shall pass over their first and tender mutual congratulations, the sweetness and reciprocity of which can only be felt and known by those possessing the most exquisite susceptibilities.

“ Prince Rinaldo, however, on this occasion, had the disappointment and mortification of finding that Manfredi had heard nothing of Santa-Maria's fortunes; for my rambles (said he) have extended no farther in your absence, than the old forest, and that only when darkness would conceal me from the sight of mankind. But haste (continued the reverend Signior) to Cosenza, and save Lord Rodolph's life and honour, which are now in imminent peril. He stands accused by his most implacable

enemy, Count Contarini, for murdering of you, my child, and seizing on your Castle:

“ Old Paul, Ignatius, and myself—*For poor Baptist—heaven rest his soul, is just dead, though, alas! not yet buried; for as I was employing myself in this last pious office, in the ancient cymetry, of which you know I have access, from a secret communication in the nothern aisle in the cloister; I was disturbed by approaching footsteps and murmuring voices, and, I must add, surprised, as that dreary part of the Castle had never, as I believe, been interrupted before.*—But to continue, as old Paul, Ignatius and myself, overheard the purport of his danger, in a conversation last night, betwixt Drossi and himself, from the secret pannel which leads into the west gallery—Struck with the remorse that Rodolph expressed on this occasion (and confiding on your return exactly at the time mentioned by you in the last packet, which Ignatius brought me from Naples; and whom I regularly sent on the same errand twice a year, and as regularly was sure to receive a packet each time—to me the greatest consolation I experienced in my recess, happy reliefs to my labours in repairing the ramparts, and even to my pleasures in painting, and my exertions in roughly modelling the statue of your departed sire—I cheered him from my cell within—bade him be of good comfort, and meet his accusers with fortitude and resolution.—But no more, my children—haste—begone fly to

Cosenza on the wings of speed, and with God's providence, all yet will turn out well.

To conclude (most noble Duke) we hastened, with all imaginable swiftness, back again into the forest; and had we directly pursued Manfredi's council, my honoured, calumniated sire, had been saved.—But, alas! too anxious to give blow for blow, to Count Philip's black revenge; we took a circuitous route towards a cottage, where I had left Santa-Maria (then, as I supposed, the Minstrel, Valentine) with charge of the casket, which contained the certain guilt and inevitable doom of Contarini.—It being my purpose to bring them both as evidences against the Count.”

Rodolph! how nearly was thy fate allied to eternity—The stretch of five minutes only stood between thee and fate.—Thy guilt, however, overpowered thy manhood and thy fortitude.—But it was heaven's decree, that thou shouldest suffer for the intent, though not the deed;—for dying, thou most assuredly could only expect to meet the divine ministers above, with the bloody hands of a real murderer.—Rodolph! farewell—and future peace dwell with you!

So may he rest, his faults lie gently on him.

—We are all men;

In our own natures frail, and capable

Of frailty; few are angels.

SHAKESPEARE.

D'Arcos, for his part, paid particular attention to the latter part of Ferdinand's concise narrative. He now easily accounted for all the strange noises, mysterious alarms, and supernatural phænomena, that had formerly frightened him away from the Castle, and which had occasioned such dreadful suggestions among all his family and household.

After the Chevalier's taking this opening of briefly touching on those past events, and relating the adventures which had formerly, and so forcibly struck him at the time, when he resided at the Castle; he then enquired of the Prince, what particular secret communications could have led into the chapel, whose walls apparently consisted of solid marble?—"On these points, Chevalier, (replied Rinaldo) all my ancestors were bound to secrecy; but as I cannot deny any thing to your virtues and goodness, and moreover, as state persecutions seem daily to lose their cruel influence, I can now briefly and safely satisfy your curiosity. *Know then, that the two principal secret communications came from the east and west galleries of the Castle; from the latter of which, a narrow winding passage, under the spacious corridors, led underneath the chapel, and to which it communicated by a square marble trabochetto, that was governed by a spring below, and invented with such art by our ancestors, whom the turbulence of past*

ages often drove, for safety, to these deep recesses; that by drawing this spring aside, they ascended through the square trap, to the centre of the chapel, where they were wont, in the dead hour of the night, to offer up their pious orisons, to the ministers of Heaven."

The Duke's curiosity being now in a great measure satisfied, he invited Rinaldo, Ferdinand, and all his party, to continue with him that night, in the castle of Cosenza. But this latter offer, the latter courteously declined—"For (said he) tho' there is no honour or gratification I could enjoy upon earth, more than that now proffered; still, my gracious Lord, I have a beloved, and now widowed mother, who has not beheld me these seven years and past, and to whom I must bend the knee of duty, gratitude, and affection—nature's first strong ties, and dearest claims. But (concluded Ferdinand) if our noble Viceroy will honour our castle with his princely visits, and lead the joyful ceremonies of my sister's happy nuptials, then, indeed, will my cup of joy be full."

Scarce, however, had the Duke time to accept of this sweet office and invitation, when the Lady Santa-Maria was led into the apartment by Orfini, followed by his wife and daughter.—Oh! for the powers of our immortal favourite, Shakspeare, to describe in full sufficient tones, the ecstacy, admiration, and delight, inexplicable, of this more than earthly scene! for, like

an angel came the all-beautiful Santa-Maria, to diffuse a general happiness around. Her form even partook of the Divinity, whilst her long tresses, winding through the silver foldings of her snowy garments, trimmed by the pregnant hand of nature, and softened by the animating touch of fancy, gave the bold finished colouring to perfection itself.

Santa-Maria, as she entered the apartment, rushed forward with conscious innocence and uncontrouled affection, to meet the embraces of her Lord and brother. Then turning round to D'Arcos, whose hand she eagerly and tenderly clasped in her's; and at the same time reclining gently and smilingly on his neck, she called him father, brother, and protector. "For here (exclaimed Santa-Maria) here, my Lords Ferdinand and Rinaldo, must I divide my gratitude and affection."

"But, by your leave, sweet Lady (said the Duke, saluting her) I must dispute the former title with my Lord D'Arcos, and here is my authority (pointing to Ferdinand;) for in the very whisper of a moment previous to your entrance, he had delegated me to, lead the joyful ceremonies of your intended nuptials; in which appointment, it was, as I suppose, included for me to be the adopted father, who is to dispose of you at the marriage altar, to the happy Lord Rinaldo."

Santa-Maria, after gracefully acknowledging the honour Duke Reignier conferred upon her, she turned aside this subject (though not without having first betrayed a crimson suffusion in her cheeks,

————— Whose red and white,
Nature's own sweet and cunning hand laid on;
and which would have reflected lustre even on the full-blooming rose) by asking Ferdinand, at what hour he proposed setting off for Martorano Castle?—"For, oh! continued she, my soul is sick, to throw itself in the fond arms of my adorable mother."
—"Anon, will we depart, sister (replied Ferdinand) for I am as eager as thyself—But lest I should grow jealous of thee, in our mother's love, we will together share the mutual, dear embrace."

The Duke, however, on hearing this, immediately interrupted them, and insisted that they should remain in the Castle to dinner. "For this your compliance (continued the Viceroy) my word is pledged to my niece, the Lady Lucy-Miranda; and here also, I must declare, that I feel myself particularly anxious, on this occasion, for an unlimited acquiescence, as it will afford me the opportunity of bringing together such amiable virtues, and inexpressible beauties, as are blended in the tempers and features of the Lady Santa-Maria and my Miranda."

"Well, well (exclaimed D'Arcos) do ye, my children, remain to dinner with the

Duke, whilst I shall employ my time upon a more essential purpose.—Beshrew me, but I feel myself grow young and vigorous again!—Thy bright eyes, Maria, have shot new powers into me.—They have strung my old chords into a fresh tune, and filled them with as much harmony, as thy fingers were used to fill thy lute withal.—Ah! rogue—hast thou after all forgot thy dear Lauria, whom thou hadst nearly sent into the grave?”

“ Pardon me, my dear fire (replied Santa-Maria) but on this sudden influx of good-fortune, I had forgot my Lauria—pardon me, and how fares she?—Oh! brother—*my* Lauria (for such I was wont to call her) is the paragon of virtue, beauty, and perfection.”

“ Well child, I forgive thee (rejoined D’Arcos) and in return, thou, having disappointed thy Lauria of one husband, it is but just, you should endeavour to recommend her to another; and if my thoughts forbode truly, yonder is one (looking obliquely at Ferdinand) who could well supply thy loss, Maria.”

“ But all this time, Chevalier (observed the Duke) you have not told us how you intend employing your time upon a more essential purpose, than in the division of our repast.”

“ In truth, my gracious Lord (replied D’Arcos) I am resolved to go forward first

to Martorano Castle, and prepare the Lady Isabella's mind to meet the strange reverse of fortunes that have attended the various turns of this day, with resignation and fortitude. It shall be my task to soften the bitter potion — (*Here a deep sigh escaped the bosom of Santa-Maria*) and make the sweet one still sweeter, tempering and alloying the rougher ingredients, by mixing with them the healing balsam, and reviving comforts of once more clasping her long lost children in her fond maternal arms. So, for the present (concluded the good Chevalier, hastening away) I will to horse, and instantly set off. In the meantime, mutual happiness and good cheer attend ye all in all."

On this, the Viceroy's page entered, and informed him, that the Lady Lucy-Miranda attended for him to dinner. The Duke, on this, esquired Santa-Maria to an adjacent apartment, where he had the generous satisfaction of blending in one embrace, and raising the foundation of a long and lasting friendship between two of the most accomplished beauties in the Scicilian territories.

CHAPTER XXIII.

I have lived,
To see inherited my very wishes
And buildings of my fancy. SHAKSPEARE.

AFTER a few cheering goblets of wine had succeeded the Duke's generous enter-

tainment, and his guests had taken a sincere, though a short farewell of himself, his beautiful niece, Lucy-Miranda, and the Orfinis, they set out on their way to the Castle of Martorano, accompanied only by Sebastian, and a few horsemen belonging to the Viceroy's body-guard—whither having soon arrived, they were received by Carlo and his comrades, under arms, at the great gate. Rinaldo having, previous to his departure, liberally presented Captain Corsi, with the vessel he had purchased to convey him from Angola.

Here again, fain would I attempt to describe the mutual ecstasies and transports that ensued between the Countess Isabella—her daughter—son—and her no less beloved Rinaldo—as they all entered the hall abreast. The fond anxious mother precipitated forward with extended arms, and embraced them—all in one. Words cannot do justice to a scene where such bursts of various passions, sensations, and emotions, convulsed the human breast; love, affection, tenderness, joy—nay, sorrow (if indeed the overflowings of the heart, gliding to the eye, and issuing in tears, could be called sorrow) if so, it was indeed—*sweet sorrow*.

After many a mutual endearment had passed and repassed between Isabella and Santa-Maria, her attention was suddenly caught and called off by the contact and sight of Carlo and Sylvia, who kneeling,

had plucked her by the train of her garment, supplicating, as it were, one glance of attention from their adored and long-lost mistress. Kindly, therefore, did she raise them up, and after folding her faithful Sylvia tenderly in her arms, she stretched her fair hand to Carlo, in token of her past and present esteem, and which he moistened with the tear of gratitude and affection.

Santa-Maria, however, could discover an extreme dejection hanging over Carlo's features, which she immediately and easily accounted for, though she passed the observation over in silence, unwilling herself to indulge emotions of a similar tendency, lest they might also infect the susceptible feelings of her mother; being now resolved to support *her* spirits; by the gaiety of her own.

Poor Carlo, indeed, had dearly loved his uncle, Drossi; and, notwithstanding the influx of happiness and good fortune that had so suddenly flowed in upon them all, still he could not but feel—and *feeling*—lament his fate, and mourn his memory.—

If Santa-Maria's first attentions from her mother had been so suddenly called off by the tenderness and anxiety of Carlo and Sylvia, it was nearly recompensed in immediately afterwards finding herself enclosed in the embrace of her amiable Lauria; and which she returned with the fondest sisterly affection. The Countess, on perceiving this, immediately seized the

favourable opportunity of introducing Ferdinand and Rinaldo to her fair kinswoman's attention and future friendship.

" 'That, my Lauria (exclaimed Santa-Maria, pointing to Ferdinand) is my brother.—Do you think he resembles Florizel much? Nay, Lauria, do not thus suffer your blushes to confess the mystery.—You loved Florizel once (continued she with an arch look) tenderly loved him, my Lauria."

" 'This Florizel, then, sister, must have been a happy mortal (returned Ferdinand, with a sigh, and clasping Lauria's fair hand in his) ah! would that I had been this Florizel!"

" 'Then (retorted Santa-Maria, with a smile) thou wouldest have been me—Oh! brother, cry ye mercy, or shame shall run thee down. What! wouldest be a woman?—Ah! beshrew me, thou mayest smile too, but I was that Florizel.—Nay, I prithee, do not question *now*, and thou shalt know all anon.—However, I will give up my Lauria to thee, Ferdinand; therefore, now think thyself the happy Florizel."—Then turning round to D'Arcos (who had stood a silent though a feeling spectator, with his niece, at the pathetic meeting between the Countess and her children) " My dear father (continued Santa-Maria) I have now, no doubt, your full pardon, having so far, and so fairly recommended your Lauria to a new husband, and as you yourself remark-

ed upon a late occasion, I really think my brother may prove the better husband of the two."

These innocent effusions of gaiety, and a happy returning flow of spirits, were, however, interrupted by the approaching presence of Manfredi, advancing down the hall, betwixt old Paul and Ignatius. His venerable appearance caused a general awe and sympathy; whilst his silver beard, reaching to his girdle, gave him an august and patriarchal appearance. Rinaldo and Santa-Maria flew to meet and embrace him; for the grateful Santa-Maria recollected his person and his features well. On this, they displaced Paul and Ignatius, and led him to the Countess Isabella, Rinaldo exclaiming as he approached—*"This is my beloved Manfredi, the guardian and protector of my youth!"*

And here—no farther to fatigue our readers with tedious retrospections to past events; we shall now conclude, if humbly so we may presume to call it,

"This strange, eventful history."

The two first days, therefore, of Prince Rinaldo's happy arrival at his castle, were spent in the enjoyment of all those convivial festivities, and mutual endearments, which might be naturally expected to flow from the unexpected tide of happiness, and the sudden change of fortune that the divine hand of Providence, in his benign wisdom, had now thought fit to pour upon them, as

a just recompence for the religion; virtue, constancy, and fortitude, that they had all displayed when under the iron scourge of adversity, danger, and persecution.

In this interval, also, the Castle was once more adorned and provided with all the riches, necessaries, and sufficiencies with which it had been anciently laid out and decorated; for Rinaldo, determined alike to throw off his princely grandeur with his princely habit, had discarded all his domestics but three, with whose assistance and Manfredi's he had also removed and concealed his immense wealth and costly trappings of state, to the secret and interior parts of the Castle, previous to his departing therefrom in the humble disguise of a pilgrim.

On the third day, Ferdinand privately set off to Cosenza, and presided at his father's and Drossi's funeral, who were buried there with all due military honours! and in the evening returned to the Castle, with Gabot, Michael, and Pietro. And, in a week after the death of Lord Rodolph (a circumstance that was cautiously avoided, all over the Castle, ever to speak of) the most noble Duke Reignier gave Santa-Maria away at the sacred altar of the chapel, to Prince Rinaldo; the suffragan of Naples officiating on this happy occasion, and the Lady Lucy-Miranda acting as bride-maid to the former. At the same time, also, Captain Orfini acted the same

friendly part towards the son of his departed friend, and blest Ferdinand with the fair hand of Lauria. And, last of all, to render it a general day of nuptial joy, the generous D'Arcos made the honest Carlo happy as them all in the possession of his long loved-Sylvia.

And, now, to sum up the last page of our history, we must not forget that the Countess Isabella (never suffering the cup of prosperity to overflow and drown the remembrances of past adversity) took the first opportunity of sending for Rachel and Rosalie to the Castle; an invitation kind and acceptable to them, indeed, at the present juncture, as they had then just lost their father, and with him their support. The former she placed under the protection of the Lady Lauria; and the once love-sick Rosalie she kept about her own person—whilst Sylvia still continued with her former mistress.

Lady Santa-Maria having taken the first opportunity of sending Sebastian to Launcelot's cottage, she ordered him also, to bring both the old man and Mopsa, with the hawk, to the Castle, together with the casket, which contained the Monk's rich bequest. This being performed, she called a special levee of her own, in the great hall, with orders that all the domestics should indiscriminately meet her, there; when, in the presence of her husband, her Lady-mother, and all, she shared the

whole contents of the casket, with her own bountiful hand, impartially and equally amongst them, in token of their past steady and faithful services.

As for her faithful and amusing companion, the *hawk*, he also participated in the general comforts; and Santa-Maria, still intending to pursue her favourite diversion, associated him with several others, training the strangers in such a manner, as to make them feel and pay a kind of obedience and homage to her first sportive and chance bird; rendering him (as it were) *king of the mews*, which she soon after formed for their general convenience, in the great court-yard.

The *lute* was constantly strung in Santa-Maria's private chamber, where, with Lauria, she played and sung the *songs* of past times, of past loves, and past dangers. Whilst heaven, blessing and cherishing their virtues, crowned alike their happy, social years, with offsprings so lovely, and so numerous withal—that many an after time and oft, the ancient walls of *Martorano Castle*; and the thick surrounding shady forests, resounded o'er and o'er with the seraphic sounds of infantine and divine harmony.

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